

gay COMMUNITY NEWS

MAY 6-12, 1990

VOLUME 17

NO 41

BIPAD: 65498

\$1.25

FOR SEVENTEEN YEARS, THE LESBIAN AND GAY WEEKLY

Chicago actions slam U.S. health care

Activists from around the country gather to call attention to inadequate health care for women, people of color, poor people, and people with HIV infection

By Debbie Gould

CHICAGO — Hundreds of AIDS activists from around the country converged on this city April 20-23 for the AIDS Coalition To Network, Organize, and Win (ACT NOW) AIDS Actions for Health Care. ACT NOW, an umbrella organization of AIDS activist groups committed to direct action in fighting the AIDS crisis, joined ACT UP/Chicago in hosting a weekend of activities, including a conference on AIDS and people of color, a 24-hour vigil in front of the only hospital for the poor here, and a demonstration through downtown Chicago which drew close to 1000 AIDS activists. All of the activities focused on the impact that the health care crisis is having on the delivery of care to people with HIV infection.

Throughout the weekend, participants stressed the historic nature of the event, saying that it was the first time that an ACT NOW national demonstration has focused

Blue Cross/Blue Shield were criticized for their stated policies of not paying for treatment IND status drugs, even though Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Commissioner Frank Young has urged insurance companies to be more liberal in their reimbursement policies. (See related story, p. 7.)

ACT UP/Chicago member Ferd Eggan emphasized that while the actions called for immediate reforms in the insurance industry in order to end discrimination, the overall demand was for the dislodging of the private insurance industry and the implementation of universal national health insurance.

"Today the uninsured are served by one system of care while the insured are served by a second," said Gunther Freehill, a member of ACT UP/Los Angeles' insurance committee. "The uninsured must rely upon the generosity of a political system which historically has been unresponsive to



Activists targeted the Cook County Hospital, which excludes women from its AIDS ward, April 23

on the AIDS-related concerns of people of color, women, and children, a disproportionate number of whom have to rely on overburdened public hospitals for their health care needs. The actions targeted the commercial health insurance industry and the public health care system.

Activists charged the insurance industry with failing to reimburse people with HIV infection for numerous medically-prescribed treatments, redlining so-called gay occupations and gay neighborhoods, and using the AIDS epidemic as a pretext for increasing premiums to the hilt to secure greater and greater profits. Activists also charged Prudential, Equitable, and other insurance companies with employing the consulting firm Claritas which markets Local Area AIDS Data to identify "gay" zip codes. Finally, Prudential, Aetna, and

the needs of the poor, people of color, the undocumented, women, gay men, and lesbians — the very people who make up the bulk of the uninsured," he said. "There can be no 'separate but equal' in our health care system."

The activists stressed the connection between the problems with the private insurance industry and the overburdened public health care system. "Where can the uninsured turn?" asked ACT UP/Chicago member Sandra Johnson. "They have no alternative but to rely on public hospitals, hospitals which are neglected by all levels of government and which simply cannot provide adequate care to the people, primarily women, children and people of color, who must use them," she said.

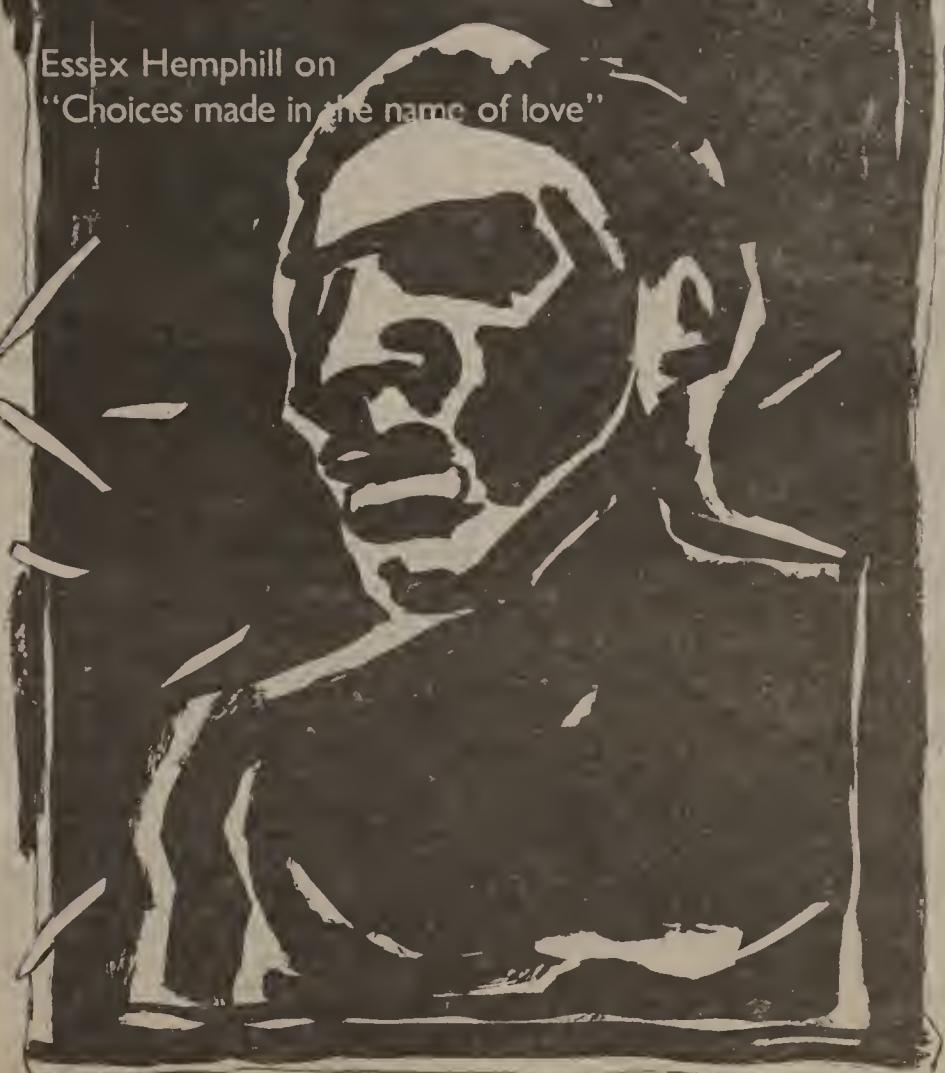
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In the center

"THE BURDEN OF REPRESENTATION"

An interview with
Tongues Untied's Marlon Riggs

Essex Hemphill on
"Choices made in the name of love"



Benefit yields 'important springboard' for organizing within communities of color

Over 200 people gather to honor the late Black gay activist Bayard Rustin in fundraiser for Boston AIDS groups

By Laura Briggs

BOSTON — More than 240 people attended a breakfast honoring Bayard Rustin, the late Black civil rights leader and gay man. The April 21 event at Club Cafe, sponsored by the AIDS Action Committee (AAC), was a fundraiser to benefit AIDS support service projects at Dimock Health Center, the Multicultural AIDS Coalition (MAC), and the Latino Health Network (LHN).

"We needed to celebrate the legacy of Rustin, who was an openly gay man at a time when it was very difficult for anyone, Black or white, to be openly gay," said organizer Harold Dufour-Angerson of AAC. "We were delighted with the turnout. It is the first time, to my knowledge, that lesbians and gays of color have gathered in such a forceful way in Boston," he said.

Many participants were surprised by the large turnout, and noted the diversity of the gathering, which included many Black, Latino, and Asian gay men and lesbians.

Dufour-Angerson said that the list generated from the event would be an important springboard for future organizing, citing dances, peer education projects, and safety net parties (AIDS education events in people's homes) as likely next steps. He also said that the Bayard Rustin memorial breakfast will be held again next year, in the tradition of the annual Martin Luther King, Jr., Memorial Breakfast in Boston.

Bayard Rustin, perhaps best remembered for his work in organizing the 1963 March on Washington, was also active in many other struggles, including AIDS work.

Rustin's activism spanned several decades and numerous issues, taking him to prison during World War II as a conscientious objector for refusing to serve in the army, then leading him to oppose the U.S. war in Vietnam, and, until his death in 1987, U.S. intervention in Central America. He was a Quaker, a socialist, and a pacifist. "From my perspective, he was truly a renaissance man," said Dufour-Angerson, "not only to be remembered as a man in the shadow of Martin Luther King, Jr., but truly a great man himself — and a gay one. In everything he touched, he conveyed his sexuality."

Barbara Smith, a Black feminist writer, activist, and founder of Kitchen Table Press, was a keynote speaker for the breakfast. In her speech, "Revolutionary Responsibility," Smith discussed the systems of inequality which AIDS highlights, and the historical context of organizing for better health care in communities of color.

"Gay men and lesbians of color are at the forefront of the fight against AIDS, especially in our racial and nationality communities, because if we're out and politicized we are not afraid to confront the realities that AIDS raises," she said.

"You can't expect a system in which the infant mortality rate of Black babies is twice that of white ones to take AIDS seriously. You can't expect a system that permits the farm workers who bring the food to our

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Quote of the week

"What motivates many of us is that we are in the generation born under *Roe v. Wade*. And we feel lucky just to have made it out of the womb alive. A lot of babies didn't."

— David Impastato, a law student at Columbia, one of an estimated 200,000 anti-choice people at an anti-abortion rally held last week in Washington, D.C., in the New York Times. Organizers of the April 29 Rally for Life said they wanted to "engage the pro-abortion groups on their own playing field" by calling for a large demonstration in the nation's capitol.

The demonstrators were treated to messages from both President George Bush and Vice-President Dan Quayle. Speaking to the crowd via telephone, Bush told the anti-abortionists, "Your presence on the Mall today reminds all of us in Government that Americans from all walks of life are committed to preserving the sanctity and dignity of human life." Quayle appeared at the rally in person and declared that "The pro-life movement is the humanitarian movement of our time."

Earlier in the day, anti-abortionists blocked access to a Planned Parenthood clinic in Washington.

Anti-choice rep defeated

CHICAGO — Homophobic state representative Penny Pullen was defeated by voters in the March 29 primary election. According to *Philadelphia Gay News*, Pullen's heavily pro-choice district voted out the 14-year incumbent in favor of unknown Rosemary Mulligan. Large amounts of pro- and anti-choice money came into the district based on the speculation by many politicos that the race would be a reflection of the nation's stand on a woman's right to choose. The National Abortion Rights Action League alone contributed \$20,000 to Mulligan's campaign.

Gay men and lesbians were also watching the election closely since Pullen is vehemently anti-gay and has favored repressive AIDS legislation. In 1989, along with Gov. Thompson, Pullen helped pass a law which made it a felony for an individual who is HIV-positive to exchange body fluids without informing his or her partner about the individual's HIV status. Pullen also argued that kissing fell under the law's jurisdiction. Violators can be sentenced to up to seven years in prison.

Pullen sat on Ronald Reagan's National Commission on AIDS and activists were fearing a win for Pullen would put her in a more powerful national position. Pullen has demanded a recount since she lost by a mere 31 votes.

□ Susan Schmitz

Mass. HIV/AIDS and Disabilities Conference a first of its kind

WORCESTER, Mass. — The common issues faced by people with HIV infection and people from the larger disability community will be explored at a conference here on May 15 and 16.

The conference, "Building Alliances Within HIV and Disability Communities," will feature three concurrent workshop sessions covering a diversity of topics including "Empowerment in the Face of Social Discrimination," "Women, Disabilities and HIV/AIDS," "AIDS Prevention and Education With Cognitively Limited Constituencies," and "Underserved Populations," among many others.

John Winske, the executive director of the Mass. Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities, and Jim McEvoy, co-founder and executive director of the Boston Living Center, Boston's only self-help agency for people with HIV infection, will be featured in a dialogue as representatives from two communities that face many of the same problems of discrimination and lack of appropriate services.

P. Clay Stephens, Doralba Munoz, Mark Schueppert, and Fay Flannery are among the many other speakers who will take part

in the event, a first of its kind in Massachusetts. "Building Alliances" will be held at the Worcester Marriott. For further information, call: (617) 482-1336.

□ Christopher Wittke

GLAD argues against referendum

BOSTON — Attorneys from the Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD) and Attorney General James Shannon's office argued in court April 5 that the Massachusetts Lesbian and Gay Rights Law should not be the subject of a statewide ballot referendum in November.

The state Supreme Judicial Court must issue a decision before August 13, according to its own guidelines. Many observers expect a ruling before early July, however, since the Secretary of State's office told the court it needs the decision in order to produce the voter information packet.

□ Laura Briggs

Newspaper prints pictures of HIV-positive prostitutes

CARSON CITY, Nev. — The *Las Vegas Review Journal*, a local newspaper, has published the pictures of several prostitutes who have been convicted of soliciting sex after testing positive for HIV, which is a felony in Nevada.

According to the journal *AIDS Policy and Law*, the newspaper published in March 1989 the picture of the first woman to be convicted under the law, which went into effect in July of 1988. Since then the pictures of other women convicted have been published as well.

The executive director of the Nevada AIDS Foundation was quoted in the journal article as saying the felony solicitation law itself is unconstitutional, and that the practice of publishing the pictures of people convicted under the law violates their privacy rights.

An editor at the *Las Vegas Review Journal* was quoted as saying the printing of the pictures was a public service. "It's public information. They are endangering other people's lives. The police provide the photo and we decide whether or not to print it. We've printed them to let people who may have had sex with this individual know that they should go to a doctor."

□ Jennie McKnight

Transsexual places second in mayor's race

YOUNTVILLE, Calif. — "Miss Terri" Pohrman, who is a transsexual, recently came in second in this small city's mayoral election. Pohrman's election slogan, "The Change Will Do You Good," couldn't save her from defeat in the April 10 race.

The *Weekly News*, a gay paper in Florida, reports that Pohrman initially decided to run for mayor after her jewelry and dress shop "Such a Deal" incurred heavy restrictions from city officials who thought the store's neon lights and sandwich board violated town laws. Pohrman has vowed to run again.

□ Susan Schmitz

Anti-gay violence rises in Utah

SALT LAKE CITY — Patrol groups of gay men will soon be passing out whistles and distributing literature in response to a rise in homophobic violence here.

The Anti-Violence Project here will undertake this endeavor in city parks and possibly gay bars, according to *The Weekly News*. Police Lieutenant Marty Vuyk was quoted as saying that the patrols are "nothing more than vigilante behavior." Vuyk also said that the police are "not denying there are assaults on gays...our statistics show there isn't an alarming number of the crimes." Vuyk did not say how many incidents of gay bashing would be considered "alarming."

Susan Schmitz

Gay group still reeling over straight hire

NEW YORK — Internal difficulties continue at the Fund for Human Dignity over a month after the board of directors of the gay and lesbian organization announced its decision to hire a heterosexual man as executive director (see *GCN*, April 1-7, 1990).

Two weeks ago, the Fund postponed its proposed national gay and lesbian writers conference and has re-scheduled it for the fall. (The Fund touts the conference as being the first of its kind on the East Coast.) The postponement came on the recommendation of Michael Pailer, a consultant hired under a grant to coordinate the event.

A vast majority of volunteers at the Fund's National Gay and Lesbian Crisis Line/AIDS 800 are boycotting the board's hiring decision. Fewer than 10 people consistently work the phones, down from a count of 90 at one time. Volunteers held a meeting May 2 to discuss changing the location of the crisis line.

While board members describe the Fund's financial situation as "healthy," staff members told *GCN* that although telemarketing continues, the annual campaign is stalled as a result of the recent resignation of development director Paula Pressley.

□ Deborah Schwartz

Gay conference to be held in Soviet Union

ESTONIA, U.S.S.R. — The first-ever conference on homosexuality in the Soviet Union will take place May 28-30 in the Estonian capital of Tallinn.

Presenters will include sociologists, ethnologists, historians, and other academics from mostly Western Europe, according to *The Weekly News*. The conference signals a groundbreaking move in a country where gay sex is illegal and can lead to five years forced labor in Siberia. Allegedly, gay people are still arrested by the KGB and held until they release the names of other gay people. It is also believed that arrestees are sent to psychiatric hospitals and given drugs to lower their sex drive.

□ Susan Schmitz

Do you like 'mannish women'?

BOSTON — Quick. Answer true or false: "I like mannish women."

Prospective police officers in Boston must answer that question and others indicating sexual orientation, including "I am very strongly attracted by members of my own sex," as part of a personality test designed to screen out people with undesirable character traits. Boston Police officials say this question and others considered discriminatory are given no weight in hiring decisions.

According to the *Boston Tab*, the city's police department uses the old version of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), a true and false test which asks a number of questions about sex and gender orientation, as well as questions which indicate whether or not the respondent is a Christian. A more recent version of the test eliminates questions about sex and religion.

Psychologists say that the test is useful in identifying individuals with psychopathology, like schizophrenia or depression. Police officials say that the test, which is scored by Boston Police psychologists, is useful for identifying individuals who might endanger the public.

□ Laura Briggs

Woman acquitted of assaulting anti-abortionist

BOSTON — Pro-choice activist Mary Almy was acquitted April 17 of charges of assault and battery with a deadly weapon resulting from a Jan. 13 demonstration outside a women's health clinic. Almy had been

arrested for kicking Operation Rescue member Steven Darling when he attempted to crawl between her legs toward a barricade outside the clinic.

Almy testified in Boston District Court that she intended to push Darling away from her, and that she could not move away from him because her back was against a four-foot high barricade. She said that if she had not pushed him away, "He would have crawled between my legs — sexually assaulting me."

Darling and his lawyer persisted in trying the case, despite two attempts by the judge to dismiss it. At Almy's arraignment, the judge had dismissed the case, only to be informed later in the day that Darling wanted it to go to trial.

During the trial, the judge again indicated that he was willing to dismiss the case when Darling, the police officer who arrested Almy, and a prosecution witness all failed to correctly identify Almy in a courtroom filled with pro-choice activists.

□ Laura Briggs

Judge orders man with HIV to refrain from sex

MOBILE, Ala. — An HIV-positive man was recently sentenced to abstinence plus one year in prison for attempting to have intercourse with a 13-year-old boy.

According to *The Weekly News*, Joel Dunaway was convicted of second-degree sodomy and was sentenced by a Mobile County Circuit Judge Douglas Johnstone. Conditions for Dunaway's eventual probation include not only abstinence, but also that he not be "in the company of children without being accompanied by heterosexual adults." There is no word yet on if or when Dunaway will appeal.

□ Susan Schmitz

Strip basketball sessions ordered to cease

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. — Winner High School board officials recently demanded that basketball practices here be conducted fully clothed. The announcement came following their discovery that Coach Jim Drake has been scheduling one practice session each year for the past eight years where players have to remove a piece of clothing each time they missed a free-throw.

Drake was quoted in *The Advocate* as saying that the "sessions are meant to instill team spirit and improve free-throw shooting." The president of the school board said residents were "wild" with anger over the sessions.

□ Susan Schmitz

Lawyer denounces AIDSphobic device

LIMESTONE COUNTY, Ala. — Public defender Jim Moffatt recently protested the use of a 200-pound "sinister" looking steel chair to restrain HIV-positive individuals in the state circuit courtroom.

According to the *Advocate*, the device resembles an electric chair and was built per a judge's orders after a detainee who was HIV positive broke free during his trial and threatened to bite anyone who came near him. If a person with AIDS "cause[s] or threaten[s] to cause courtroom disturbances" he or she can be placed in the chair which has restraints for the waist, legs, chest, and wrists.

Moffatt argued that anyone who is placed in the chair will be denied a fair trial because "a jury is going to see...a rabid dog in a cage."

□ Susan Schmitz

Correction

The photo of Amber Hollibaugh featured in the Calendar last week should have been credited to Marilyn Humphries. We apologize for the omission.



A soldier at Fort Benning in Georgia confronts activists protesting U.S. policy in El Salvador, April 28

Gay and Central America activists merge in Southern demo

Demonstrators target a Georgia army base where Salvadoran troops are trained

By Judy Gerber

COLUMBUS, Ga. — ACT UP/Atlanta joined with a coalition of peace and solidarity and religious groups April 28 in the largest demonstration against U.S. intervention in El Salvador ever held in Georgia. Calling for the closure of the Army's School of the Americas (SOA) at Fort Benning, Ga., 200 participants came from Florida, Alabama, North Carolina, Washington, D.C., and all over the state of Georgia.

The demonstrators targeted the SOA where 6,000 Salvadoran troops have already been trained in counterinsurgency warfare, and where over 500 will be trained this year. According to the Congressional investigation into last year's massacre of the six Jesuit priests, all but one of the Salvadoran military personnel arrested for the massacre were trained by the United States, including at Fort Benning.

"The army says that they teach human rights practices at the School of the Americas, but the course catalog states clearly that their program is counterinsurgency warfare," said Meg Randolph,

spokesperson for the Atlanta Committee on Latin America (ACLA). "Besides, what kind of human rights training could it possibly be if a soldier graduating from the School of the Americas in December 1988 is involved in a massacre of the magnitude of the one last November," she said.

Other speakers at the rally included a representative of Casa El Salvador in Tallahassee, Fla., who addressed the need to understand the U.S. role in El Salvador in a regional context, saying, "Whether it be the U.S.'s invasion of Panama, support of the contras, or running the war in El Salvador, we need to stop the yankee imperialists' aggression."

Angela Sanbrano, executive director of the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), told the crowd, "We want the School of the Americas shut down now. Not next year, not next month, not tomorrow, but today!"

The United States government has sent \$4 billion in military aid to the government

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Planners of lesbian conference focus on representation

Organizers of the upcoming National Lesbian Conference hold third planning session in Kansas City

By Jennie McKnight

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — About 125 lesbians met here April 27-29 to continue laying plans for the National Lesbian Conference, a first-of-its-kind mobilization of dykes which will take place a year from now in Atlanta (see *GCN*, Oct. 22, 1989).

The Kansas City gathering was the third in a series of national planning meetings aimed at bringing many lesbians into the process of putting together the conference. The first was held in March of 1989 in Durham, N.C. and the second took place in Portland, Ore. in July of last year. In addition to serving as an open national planning meeting aimed specifically at bringing lesbians from the Midwest into the process, the Kansas City meeting was also slated as the first meeting for the conference Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee, which is composed of 78 seats for representatives of the various regions, constituencies and organizations selected by planners, did not actually meet as a full group because there were several gaps in the representation. In particular, there were a few regions which have yet to select delegates to serve on the Steering Committee.

"We certainly would have liked to have the whole Steering Committee seated," said Janet Spotted Eagle, a Steering Committee member from Independence, Missouri and a

primary organizer of the Kansas City gathering. But she said that planners hoped the full Steering Committee would be organized by mid-September, when the group is scheduled to meet in Atlanta. Until then, a smaller subgroup of the Steering Committee will act as an interim decision-making body and work closely with the conference staff.

This smaller 13-member group, according to several planners who spoke with *GCN*, also reflects the goals for representation set at previous meetings. Those goals are to have 50 percent of the women in decision-making groups be lesbians of color, 20 percent lesbians with disabilities, and five percent old lesbians. The guidelines for parity apply to all levels of organizing, from the Steering Committee to the regional organizing committees.

As has been the case with previous planning meetings, participants contacted by *GCN* expressed general optimism about the process that has taken place so far, many stressing the commitment to "inclusivity" that organizers have maintained. "The diversity is something I've never experienced before," said Mary Lu Lewis, the recently-hired national organizer/activist who will staff the Atlanta office when it opens in June. Lewis, who has worked with the National Women's Studies Association and the

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Historic demo against child sexual abuse draws hundreds

Organizers call the public event "empowering" for people who are usually told "don't tell"

By Laura Briggs

BOSTON — Billed as the "first ever" demonstration to end child sexual abuse, "No More! A March to Stop Child Sexual Abusers," drew more than 500 women and men to the streets here last weekend. The city of Boston declared April 28 "Incest Survivors' Day" in honor of the march from Government Center to Boston Common. Organizers said they were pleased with the number of survivors and their supporters who turned out.

"The march was just incredibly exciting. It was like gay pride marches in some ways — to look back and see a sea of people, and to feel that we're not having to hide anymore," said Pam Mitchell, an organizer and speaker at the rally. "There was this high-energy feeling to the whole day."

The demonstration, led by the Moving Violations motorcycle club and punctuated by the rhythms of the percussion group Batucada Belles, was co-sponsored by the political action committee of the Incest Survivors Network and the Boston Women's Commission. The march demanded recognition of children's rights, acknowledgement that both women and men are abusers, and that both girls and boys are abused. The demonstrators also called for changes in the judiciary and legislature, including passage of a bill before the Massachusetts state legislature to extend the statute of limitations in child sexual abuse cases.

The activists also demanded a more sympathetic investigative and judicial process that recognizes the needs of children. When children testify in court cases, activists said that children should be allowed to testify through live video, that cross-examination rules should be modified to reflect the power imbalance between children and abusers, that prior charges and convictions of child sexual assault should be taken into consideration in subsequent

tee member Alice Roberge told *GCN*. "The march enables us to take power back in a very visible way. We don't have to be ashamed any more, we don't have to hide," she said, adding, "The feeling of being together was very powerful. As survivors, we're so used to being alone, so used to being alienated. It was kind of strange — the speakers were talking about these horrible things, and yet there was this real atmosphere of celebration and joy."

The secrecy and shame surrounding incest was one of the biggest barriers to organizing the action, according to activists. "People had to get through a lot of fears to come to the action, and I know some didn't come because of it," said Roberge. "You have to ask yourself, 'Is my perpetrator going to find out I was here? What are my co-workers going to think of me if they see me on TV or in the newspaper? What about my extended family — I haven't told them,'" she said.

"Shame is part and parcel of incest," said Mark Bergen, who worked on organizing men for the event. "We're told, 'don't tell,' and we build a lot of defenses around not telling. And that includes blaming ourselves," he told *GCN*.

Bergen estimated that about 30 or 40 men attended the event, and said that organizing men was difficult. "My frustration with it was that I didn't know how to start. Women have developed networks around this sort of thing, but men haven't. Our society is just beginning to deal with the fact that this is something that happens to men," he said.

"Our society says a man is always looking for sex and always wants it. It says a man should feel privileged to have sex. Society says that men can't be abused — it's a contradiction in terms. What's underneath this is the sexist agenda, that men are strong, men are abusers. I don't think we're going to get past this until we acknowledge that men and women are abused, and men and



Hundreds of survivors and their supporters demand an end to child sexual abuse, April 28

women are abusers. It's about strong abusing weak," said Bergen.

Roberge said that the organizers from the Incest Survivors Network, a women's group, wanted men to be there and to feel comfortable. She said that there was no controversy about that issue, despite the fact that some of the earlier political organizing around child sexual abuse contained a strong separatist thread. However, Roberge said that the group wanted men to organize each other.

Speakers at the rally emphasized the diversity of the experience of child sexual abuse. Deaf community activist Patti Wilson discussed abuse of people with disabilities, as did Connie Panzarino. Virginia LaLonde, well-known locally for her imprisonment when she refused to reveal to a judge the location of her daughter who was in hiding, spoke of her struggle as a mother to protect her daughter from a father LaLonde believes was abusing her. Habe spoke about the growing recognition of the prevalence of ritual cult abuse of children. □

COMMUNITY VOICES

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May your next lover be a heavy-weight boxer

Dear GCN:

In your paper I have read several articles and letters about lesbian/partner abuse. I have not read much about the abuse some of us queens are subjected to by our lovers.

I record below a letter to a former lover. I did not leave it with him as I was too afraid he would find me and let me know exactly what he thought of it. But maybe he'll read it in your paper and realize what he's done: but I doubt he'll ever accept any of the blame. He never did.

By the time you get home and find this letter, I will be far away, safe for the first time in years. Believe me when I say I've wanted to write this letter for a long time. I'll never forget you. You made me so happy when we first met and later became lovers. You fed my need, my hunger for love and attention. You made me feel special.

Sex between us was wonderful right from the start. It got even better as we became accustomed to each other. You knew all my secret spots that really turned me on. You could excite me with a wink, or one of your special pats on my bottom.

Yes, I remember all those things. And I also remember the day my world started crumbling down around me. I still feel the sting of that first slap across my face—the look of hate and disgust in your eyes. Do you even remember why you felt you had to slap me? I do. It was because I was at the library instead of at home where you thought I should have been. You had forgotten that you had asked me to return two overdue books you had checked out.

I also remember the second time you hit me. This time it was more than just a slap. You cut my lip, requiring five stitches, when you punched me in the mouth. You also

gave me a black eye. I stayed home until I was healed so you didn't have to lie and make excuses to our friends. You said you were sorry and that it would never happen again. And, like the first time, I believed you and told you it was okay.

That was the beginning. Since then I have been admitted to the Emergency Room four times with multiple cuts and bruises.

Yes, I have mementos of my time with you. The scars on my body will heal and fade somewhat. The dentist has been able to repair the damage inside my mouth, but the scars inside my heart will be with me for as long as I live. They are still raw and sore.

I have more mementos than I bargained for. I think of you when I brush my teeth. Yes, I think of you often. If you ever loved me as I thought you once did, please wish me the good fortune of never meeting you again. May your next lover be a heavyweight boxing champion. You deserve him!

Connie Knight
Goodyear, Ariz.

Don't forget your own needs

Dear GCN:

I am writing this because I feel that more and more women are getting caught in the dependency trap. I want to share an experience of mine. I met a woman who at the time I desperately needed. I needed to feel loved. I had a crush on her long before we got together. I became so dependent on her it was like I would stop living if she had left me. I took all of her shit, too scared to make a stand for fear of losing her.

I completely put my own needs and wants aside for her. We were constantly fighting and part was my fault, but I took all the blame and gave in even when I felt like I shouldn't. Finally I realized what in the hell am I taking this shit for. I feel like most of the problems could have been worked out if we talked, but we didn't. She was always right.

Dependency on another human being is just like dependency on drugs. It's a self-destructive sickness just like alcoholism. A healthy love is one where you don't forget your own needs. It has to be a two-way street. No matter how much you love someone, if they are controlling you then you need to break out of it.

Megan Reyes
475431

1401 State School Rd
Gatesville, TX 76599

Integrity and bisexual identity

Dear GCN:

GAYER THAN THOU would make a good subtitle for the Seigel-Dreher/Brook letter exchange (GCN March 11-17, 1990) about the Northampton Lesbian/Gay Pride March planning meetings. Seigel complains that by removing "bisexual" from the march title and the exclusion of open bisexuals from the steering committee, she feels invisible; Dreher and Brook counter with the cry of integrity and tell Seigel to go form her own community since "lesbian and gay issues (are) not identical to bisexual issues." The last time I heard this debate the vote was to add "lesbian" to the name of a gay organization. We got real nasty then, too.

Dreher and Brook complain that by having "bisexual" in the title of a gay pride march, bisexuals divert "a political issue into a sexual one." Whose political issue? The people watching the parade think we're all sexual: straights don't think bisexuals are any different from lesbians and gays. (Personally, I don't give a damn if "bisexual" is in the title or not, our movement's name is getting too long anyway).

Sure, bisexuals may get the occasional benefit of heterosexual privilege, but it hasn't reduced my chances of losing my job if I come out at work. I get more privileges from being a pretty-white-girl-who-makes-a-lot-of-money (and it's still less than my male coworkers), yet I still have a hard time finding the kind of people I want to date. (Yes, I do tell women I want to date that I'm bisexual; I have to deal with it sometime and I prefer to do so before intimacy.) As for the lesbianism being a way of life schtick, as a woman I do put women first. I support women in the arts, buy women-made products, read women's books, go to women's events — only I don't lie to myself about whether I can find an occasional man attractive or not. I put my time in; I don't steal (literally or figuratively) from the women's community.

I, too, cringe when I hear a newcomer to the lesbian community announce that "Gee,

gay COMMUNITY NEWS

Gay Community News is produced by a collective dedicated to providing coverage of events and news in the interest of gay and lesbian liberation. The collective consists of a paid staff of ten, a general membership of volunteers, and a board of directors elected by the membership.

Opinions reflected in "editorials" represent the views of the paid staff collective. Signed letters and columns represent the views and opinions of the authors only. We encourage all readers to send us comments, criticism, and information, and to volunteer and become members.

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Gay Community News is published weekly (except the last week of April, August and December), by the Bromfield Street Educational Foundation, Inc., a non-profit corporation. Our office is located at 62 Berkeley Street, Boston, MA 02116. (617) 426-4469, TTY/TDD 426-0332.

Second-class postage paid at Boston, Mass. Annual subscription rate is \$33. Institutional rate: \$40 ISSN: [0147-0728]. Member Gay and Lesbian Press Association, New England Press Association, Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, COSMOP member

GCN is included in the Alternative Press Index, published quarterly by the Alternative Press Center, Inc., Box 33109, Baltimore, MD 21218.

Volumes I-15 of **GCN** are available on microfilm for \$40/volume, \$550/complete set. Write **GCN/Microfilm** for more information.

Postmaster: Send address changes to: **Gay Community News**, 62 Berkeley St., Boston, MA 02116.

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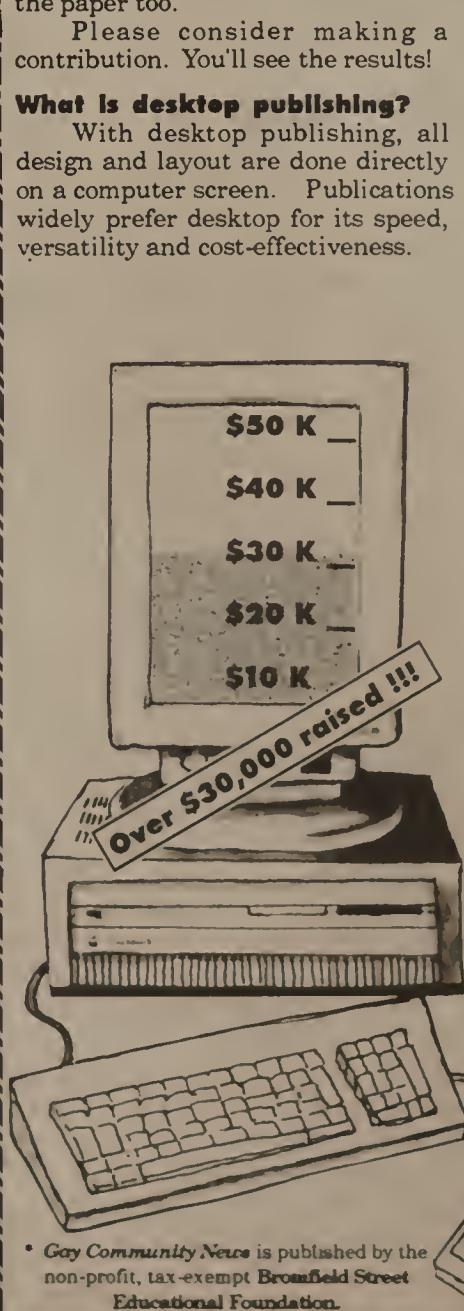
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I guess I'm really bisexual. I just broke up with my boyfriend and since lesbians don't get AIDS, I've decided it's time for me to explore the lesbian side of my sexuality." Not every bisexual comes part of a package deal (husband and wife seeks bisexual female) or with strings attached (two or more concurrent relationships). Some of us are into serial monogamy. We just know that the next person may be male or female and don't swap labels depending on who we're dating now.

Dreher and Brook want integrity. So do I. By telling bisexuals to go home, we shrink the size of our gay community. The 10 percent figure gets closer to five percent and we get closer to being ignored. By telling bisexuals to grow up and come out as gay, we send mixed messages to our supporters. The upcoming publication of the Kinsey study on lesbian safe-sex habits is a good example. The survey was done at Michigan two years ago; the survey numbers distributed at Michigan a year later found that more than a few self-identified lesbians still fuck men (without condoms or birth-control). The "bisexual" responses weren't tabulated — too few women checked off that description for the Kinsey analysts to bother with them. Other less obvious examples of division are the claims that the animal rights, anti-war, and no nuke movements are automatically aligned with the gay rights movements. I ride a bike, too, but the only connection I make to sex on it is that I don't feel like any after riding 50 miles.

Pax,
Kathy Morgan

Still judging

Dear GCN:

On the second page of *GCN* March 18-24 was a short piece describing a day-long "sex workshop" hosted by the London Lesbian Separatist Group. As part of the agenda of the group, a statement was issued which said that they "will not be representing SM as a valid form of lesbian sexual practice..."

I am finding that more and more, as we enter the sexually repressed '90s, the very women who struggled and fought for recognition within the gay rights movement and within the feminist movement — the same women who fought for freedom of sexual and sensual expression — are fighting to repress and negate the sexual expression of their own sisters.

This is not specifically an indictment of the London Group, but their explicit statement gave voice to what has been an unofficial policy statement at Women's Music festivals, and other events of interest to lesbians and bisexual women. Over and over, I have been "told" that SM is just an extension of violence against women, and as a form of sensual expression, only degrades and humiliates women. This is usually accompanied by a lecture on battered women — which totally ignores the credo of all true SM practitioners: Safe, Sane and Consensual.

I will not defend my sexuality...not my gender preference, and certainly not what I like to do in bed. But I will ask this simple question: Isn't freedom to love whom we wish in the manner we wish something our civil rights movement has insisted upon? Isn't a person who condemns, and wishes to curtail, my consensual sexual activity because they think it immoral (or...dare I say, politically correct?) the same as any conservative politico who wants to do the same thing to gay men and lesbians in general for *their* consensual sexual activity?

I don't insist that all women enjoy the things I do. But I do insist that they cease judging me and my fellow SM practitioners by their ruler of morality. It is a sad irony that sees women who love women attacking other women for "doing it" differently.

Sincerely,
Laura Antoniou
New York, N.Y.

Objectifying ourselves

Dear GCN:

As a long-time subscriber and avid supporter of yours, I want you to know how much I appreciate your being in the world.

However, several of my friends and I feel very uncomfortable with the picture of the woman you have in the section of the paper where you seek subscriptions. It's far preferable to have something like you do in this past week's March 25-31 issue of *GCN*.

Women live through enough objectification, where we're viewed primarily as sex objects. And here we are, doing it to ourselves. (I'm assuming women are involved as equals in your decision-making.)

Where allegiances count

By Marcia Deihl

In the spirit of your article on page 3 in the April 1-7 issue of *Gay Community Nudes*, (*GCN*'s April Fools Issue) regarding the dyke and bi women's factions "slinging it out;" I have a few modest proposals.

1. O.K. We give up. Forgive us for messing up the purity of the Queer Liberation Movement. From here on, all of us bisexuals will pack up our valises and leave, perhaps knocking on the doors of The Family First, Up With People, Helms for Hero, and other inspiring heterophilic groups. We know that they will welcome us as bisexual people. Oh, and by the way, I'm afraid we'll have to take along Virginia Woolf, Kate Millett, Marlon Brando, Leonard Bernstein (who recently brought the artistic elite to task on the homophobic censorship issue by refusing their National Hotsy Totsy Artist Award), Christopher Isherwood, Sappho, Vita Sackville-West, Colette, Billie Jean King, Margaret Mead, Eleanor Roosevelt, Cary Grant, Berthold Brecht, Lotte Lenya, Rudolph Valentino, Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich, Boy George, and most fashion designers. Not that I encourage the Star System, but we all know that Rock Hudson loosened up a lot of bucks for the AIDS fight. (Note I did not include him in the above list, as he was probably one of many "married-as-a-Hollywood-front" gay people, and not truly bi "in his heart.")

2. We read in the article that choosing fair and qualified mud-slinging referees would create a problem. The solution is simple. From now on, all queers will be required to present valid ID cards which can be obtained by sworn affidavits from their past three lovers (including photocopies of these lovers' IDs). In order to prevent fraud, we support the use of break-ins and phone taps to get a hold of those telltale diaries, letters, and long distance calls. Thirdly, we recommend that we subpoena people's therapists to see if they are fantasizing or dreaming about anyone of the opposite sex.

But seriously, folks...This is a thorny issue. And a horny issue! No, seriously, folks...Sarah Dreher and Lis Brook (letter to *GCN* of March 11-17, 1990) state that bisexual women should "create their own community and not attach themselves to the lesbian community." As someone who has been attaching myself to the women's community for 20 years, I don't feel like a lamprey eel or something. I've always been here. I've been called a boy; I've sung at Gay Pride marches when I was straight; I've sung very out lesbian music for the past 17 years no matter what I was doing in my personal life (if Connie Chung asks, it's been mostly celibate); in less self-assured times, I've passed as straight with my family and at work when I had a woman lover; more recently, I've worn a pink triangle at work even though I had a man lover, I've battled internalized homophobia and only recently come out to my 75-year-old parents. Am I that different from many lesbians?

The sad part is, I think I'd like Sarah and Lis if we met at a Howard Johnson's on the Interstate. I think we'd have a lot in common, and we might exchange a knowing

Not only does this picture portray sexual objectification — using women's bodies to sell your paper, just as almost every other magazine in the U.S. does, with the half nude woman who also "happens" to have a so-called "perfect" figure — but she also looks bound (which feels frightening to some of us, especially as survivors of sexual abuse, harassment).

Additionally, the gender of the other person in the picture isn't very clear and could easily be mistaken for a man (I'm assuming she's a woman since this is in *GCN*) and looks like he or she is about to rape her — touching her breasts as she's bound — or, as she's lying there passively.

There's far too much violence and sexual abuse of women for me to feel comfortable with this picture. Please consider using another picture. I'd really appreciate your serious consideration.

Sincerely,
T. Jones
Somerville, Mass.

Inspired to resist

Dear GCN:

Just wanted to thank Jeremy Grainger and Read Weaver for their article on tax resistance (*GCN*, April 8-15, 1990). The ar-

wink. We need to be clear on whether an event is for women, for queers, or for lesbian separatists. I strongly support lesbian separatist events and spaces, and I personally would never intrude as a bisexual woman. I support the right of the women at Crone's Harvest to "unwelcome" men and also the rights of any minority to meet alone, for soul-filling honest exchange. But a Queer Pride Rally is another event entirely. Historically, it has been a coalition event, even though it is for Queer Pride primarily.

There are no easy historical parallels to this bi-women-versus-lesbian-identity phenomenon. It is new. I see it as one of the most recent proud offspring of past liberation movements: free speech, civil rights, anti-war, feminist, and gay and lesbian. It is our strength that we keep evolving and growing. But new parents are always skittish with new babies. We have a common struggle. Heterosexism rules; that much is clear. But we must separate institutionalized heterosexism as a system from 1) the homophobia of individuals, and 2) our personal/sexual choices. The latter two may change, but heterosexism lingers on. Whether I am with a woman or a man, I can choose to be closeted or not about my Queerness.

There are some parallels within other minority cultures. Light-skinned African-Americans can sometimes "pass" as white. Historically, the racism of the times and the lure of making some money (for a change!) forced some people to choose this option. But it was often a soul-killing option, and today there are many light-skinned African-Americans who are activists for their culture's liberation. Although there can be tension in this "privilege," and they can and sometimes do benefit by their likeness to the dominant/oppressor culture, they are still welcomed in activist groups. They are judged on their allegiances and actions, not the purity of their darkness. We can learn by this example. But this example is not a great one, first of all, because I don't believe a white person can ever understand the African-American experience. I can educate myself about it, but I cannot presume to appropriate any of these experiences as my own. (For anyone who disagrees, read *Beloved* by Toni Morrison!)

Like ethnic minorities, gay men, lesbians, and people with invisible disabilities, we can't always be identified by our appearance. But bisexuals differ from many minorities because each person's life process is different. For some, bisexuality may be a phase. For others, like me, an attraction to both women and men has been present for 30 years. There are historically "technical" bisexuals, who end up primarily queer or straight, who may not choose to be known as bisexuals per se. There are celibate bisexuals who could easily "pass" in their lifestyles, but who choose to become involved in Queer Liberation anyway. Most importantly, it is up to each individual to choose to come out by self-naming. Self-naming is a personal, transformative, spiritual experience. If some "famous" les-

ticle was practical while offering good, clear arguments for deciding to resist. I was inspired to stop paying my telephone tax again, which I had refused to pay for years, and then began again for some reason — laziness, I guess. But it felt good this month to write my little note explaining why I won't pay. Such a small thing to do, but really, once you know where it all goes, how can you pay?

I'm still asking myself that question when it comes to more substantive tax resistance, but at least I'm thinking about it! Please keep printing articles that challenge lesbians and gays to make the hard decisions.

Sincerely,
Tatiana Schreiber
Jamaica Plain, Mass.

Way off base

Dear GCN:

What is with Elizabeth Pincus and her movie reviews? In the past, I have found most of her reviews so off-base that I have often wondered if I had perhaps seen a different film with the same title. Up to this point, I have let my opinion go as an irreconcilable difference of background, politics and values. Having just finished Pincus' review of *Sweetie*, however, I feel

bians who are sleeping with men still choose to call themselves lesbians, I have to support them. (I admit that I wish they'd notice there is a more appropriate word, which is very flexible, and a happenin' bi movement that would welcome them.)

As bi's, we too sometimes choose to pass, in our neighborhoods, at work, or with our family of origin. So do closeted lesbians and gay men. But it *too* is soul-killing. I say that a bisexual who is out there marching is worth at least as much to the cause of Queer Liberation as any 100 percent pure lesbian or gay man who is completely closeted. I also understand that how we name our groups and our events is touchy. But it is important. I remember the difficult past struggles over changing "Gay" to "Gay and Lesbian" for both Boston's Pride March and this newspaper, *GCN*. Some people may fear that eventually all of the queer minority groups such as TVs, TSs, S/Ms, Boylovers, Celibates, etc., etc. will want their names in the groups too. But for now, we're the ones asking.

And why is it that it is the women that are fighting among themselves and not the men? Part of it is because lesbian-feminism doesn't have a strong male theoretical and cultural equivalent. Since both women and lesbians are oppressed by the patriarchy, we have bonded together in the past, in work and in love. Breaking this bond would be extremely painful. Or are men less uptight about bisexuals in their midst? I think so. Why is this? Is it easier to be bedfellows than to be theory-fellows?

Personally, I feel more like a bridge than a spy. I contribute to Queer Pride by simply being myself with the lesbians, as well as the men and the straight women I do hang with, when I talk about issues such as AIDS funding, foster care, domestic partnership legislation, and queerbashing. Although I would march even if it were called a "Gay Pride March" again, I'm happier whenever I see "and Lesbian," and it lifts my heart whenever I see the recent "and Bisexual." Should I be allowed on the Northampton Pride committee? To paraphrase a remark I once heard, "two Queers, three opinions." I can only speak for myself when I say I would hope so.

I also hope that the women of Northampton who object to bisexuals at their Queer Pride march try to get beyond old stereotypes, get real, get updated, and get down! There's a lot of work to do in Patriarchyland! And we're here to stay. In 1983, when my group of six "BiVocals" put ads in the papers for our fantasy Boston Bisexual Women's Network, we didn't know who would show up. We never guessed that today we would have an international mailing list of over 700 names. Or that the Boston Bisexual Men's Network would be organized soon after. Or that the combined BBWN, BBMN, and regional East Coast Bisexual Network mailing list would add up to over 2,000 names. Or that national and international bisexual networks and conferences would spring up. Let's keep talking. Onward to the Les-Bi-Gay '90s!

compelled to voice my opinion against what *GCN* is attempting to pass as serious criticism.

Pincus seems to confuse her personal agenda with director Jane Campion's intent in making this film. Her theory that the film is primarily about incest is based on questionable interpretations of a few vague, peripheral scenes. It also undermines the subtlety and craft of Campion's direction. A talented director never forces an audience to accept a limited and personal interpretation of his or her work. Campion understands this. This film is far more than a tirade against incest. Campion knows how to use the tools of her craft: pacing, symbolism, the camera. These are the appropriate subjects for film criticism — or artistic criticism of any kind.

Reading Pincus' review, I felt as if I were an unwilling voyeur at a session with Pincus and her psychotherapist. Pincus should keep such personally volatile issues in that arena, or, if she feels compelled to address the public, she should write an article that deals with incest and domestic violence. A film review is a place to discuss form, structure, and craft.

Sincerely,
John K. Burton
Jamaica Plain, Mass.

OBITUARIES



Tristano Palermino

BOSTON — A bas relief sculpture of Bartolomeo Vanzetti and Nicola Sacco seemed an appropriate backdrop when the wide circle of family and friends of Tristano Palermino came together for a memorial service on Sunday March 11 at the Community Church of Boston. Tristano died November 22 at Davies Medical Center in San Francisco after a three-year struggle with AIDS, and was followed four weeks later by his lover David Glassberg. He had served as president of People With AIDS-SF and as editor of *PWA Voice*. He was 35.

A native of Wakefield and 1976 graduate of the College of Public and Community Service (CPCS) at the University of Massachusetts-Boston, Tristano moved to San Diego after his graduation, where he worked for three years as a social worker. He then moved to San Francisco in January, 1980, establishing a practice as a massage therapist. In 1984 he became one of the first social workers for the San Francisco AIDS Foundation and later the organization's social services director, a post he held until his diagnosis in October, 1986.

I had the good fortune to know Tristano during two pivotal points in his life: I first met him — he was still Bob then — in late 1973, when we were both students at CPCS during the college's chaotic but exhilarating first year. At the time he was sorting out his sexuality, and he later credited me as a role model who had helped him to come out.

I re-established contact with Bob early in 1979, after I had moved from Boston to San Francisco. We then connected at the magical first Spiritual Conference for Radical Fairies, held later that year in the Arizona desert. Relocating to the Bay Area provided him with the opportunity to redefine his self identity. In a singular move, he decided to rename himself after his cat (who had been named, in turn, for a beloved uncle).

After his move, Tristano lived with me for three wonderful months. Unfortunately it ended much too soon, after our house at Church & Market was sold; nevertheless, we remained in close contact over the next several years. During that period he became a founder of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, a "convent" of gay male "nuns," and helped lead a raucous guerilla theatre zap on an infestation of fundamentalists who had been dispatched on a misbegotten mission to "save" Castro Street by preaching their hatred for us.

Tristano was eminently a spiritual person, viewing political action as a basic expression of his being. Rising to the challenge of his AIDS diagnosis was his finest hour: As a member of a PWA speakers bureau he disarmed hostile high school students and others by his gentle but straightforward manner. He was twice arrested in civil disobedience actions in Washington, on one occasion inspiring his mother to join him in sitting down in front of the White House. As persons with AIDS allowed to meet the Pope during his visit to San Francisco, he and his lover were able to present the pontiff with an open letter of protest.

After Tristano's death, Mayor Art Agnos proclaimed December 17, the date of his memorial service in San Francisco, as Tristano Palermino Remembrance Day.

Not long after moving back to Boston in 1983 I had to endure a searing personal

tragedy. I experienced firsthand Tristano's skill and warmth as a counselor when I received a moving letter of condolence from him — a letter that helped me begin to heal my grief, for which I will be eternally grateful.

Tristano was one of a kind, a person who had grown immeasurably from the sometimes awkward adolescent I had first met so many years before. He had magic. I miss him. □ John Kyper

Gregory Kolovakos

NEW YORK — Gregory Kolovakos, writer and translator of Latin American literature and director of the literature program of the New York State Council on the Arts, died of AIDS April 16 at his home here on the Upper West Side. He was 38 years old.

Gregory attended Colgate University and Yale University where he received two master's degrees. He taught and lectured at several colleges, most recently at City College where he taught creative translation. He translated works by Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortazar, Jose Donoso and Mario Vargas Llosa.

Gregory joined the staff of the New York State Council on the Arts as director of the literature program in 1979. Over the years he was involved in the funding of hundreds of emerging writers and organizations. Jewelle Gomez, who worked with Gregory at the council, said, "Before diversity became a catchword, he had the idea that he had the duty — and it was more than a duty, it was a joy — to make people see that there should be space for disenfranchised voices. And he did this on a day to day basis, with every writer and every administrator that he came in contact with and *not* just when there was a reporter nearby."

In 1985, Gregory co-founded the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) with a handful of other cultural and political leaders including: Jewelle Gomez, Barry Adkins, Allen Barnett, Bruce Michael Gelbert, Hall Offen, Marcia Pally, Darrell Yates-Rist, Arnie Kantrowitz, Vito Russo and Jim Owles. GLAAD was established in response to poor and homophobic reporting of the AIDS crisis in the mainstream press, in particular reporting about the death of Rock Hudson by the *New York Post*. Chris Payne, a member of GLAAD's first Board of Directors on which Gregory served as chair, remembered Gregory as "a tremendous source of energy and enthusiasm, especially in the early days when GLAAD's first phone number was Gregory's answering machine."

Gregory met his long-time friend and colleague Darrell Yates-Rist in the early days of GLAAD. Yates-Rist recalled his first meeting with Gregory: "I met a man whose brilliance, energy, and depth of commitment I had simply never known. Without him there will forever be an emptiness in our quest for a more generous sense of humanity in this world, in both life and in art."

Gregory was actively involved in Poets, Playwrights, Editors, Essayists and Novelists (PEN) American Center, part of a worldwide writers organization dedicated to freedom of expression. He was a member of the translation committee and chair of the PEN Fund for Writers and Editors with AIDS, which held a benefit in September 1988 entitled "Playwrights and Poets on Stage." Gregory also co-founded AIDS Treatment Project, which offers financial support to visual artists and writers with HIV disease.

Gregory joined the Board of Directors of the Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center in 1987 and was elected co-chair in 1990. With writer and editor Paula Martinac, he founded "In Our Own Write," the Center's reading series that showcases emerging gay and lesbian authors, giving particular attention to writers of color. President of the Board David Nimmons said, "Gregory infused his work among us with his own deep artistic awareness, reminding us always that activism can be accomplished with pride, grace and wit. During his four years at the Center, he showed by example the spirit and strength that these walls stand for. We are much richer for his gifts, and will miss him enormously." Former board member Diana Leo recalled that Gregory "was so bright, so sharp, so insightful and incisive about literature. And

he was a radical; he was an exciting, demanding person who was never complacent."

Memorial donations can be made to the Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center and will go toward establishing the Kolovakos Memorial Lectures on Lesbian and Gay Liberation, a quarterly program that will bring prominent gay and lesbian speakers from around the country.

Gregory is survived by his lover of many years, Bruce Becker. □

Brian McGahen

SYDNEY, Australia — One of Sydney's prominent gay activists of the past two decades died April 2. Brian McGahen, politically active since his student days in the '60s, had been aware that he was HIV-positive for some years, and during 1989 his condition worsened dramatically.

Brian's public political activism began when he joined the Communist Party and the Draft Resisters Union in protest against the Vietnam war and the forced involvement of Australian young men. From the early 1970s on, he was active in the movement for gay rights in New South Wales (NSW). Along with other gay activists, he was instrumental in getting gay issues on to the Communist Party's agenda.

In 1979 during the International Year of the Child, when state funding was available to community groups, the Gay Solidarity Group applied for funding to conduct a forum on "The Child's Developing Sexuality." It was Brian who guided the application through the homophobic bureaucratic maze and won approval for it.

However, the NSW Minister for Youth and Community Services at the time — the now-discredited and jailed Rex Jackson — refused to sign the order. The Gay Solidarity Group went ahead with the forum without any IYC funding as part of the 1979 Gay Solidarity Week, which also included the second annual Gay Mardi Gras Parade.

Brian was later to become directly involved with the Mardi Gras as the committee's chair until 1984. That year, he was one of three openly gay people elected to the Sydney City Council on which he served as an Independent until the then-NSW Labor government sacked the city council and installed unelected commissioners in 1987. He was also extremely active and outspoken on AIDS issues.

A controversial figure to some of his gay movement colleagues, Brian was recognized as a bold if not always popular activist.

□ Kendall Lovett



Jean-Claude Letist

COLOGNE, West Germany — With great sadness the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) announced that ILGA Secretary General Jean-Claude Letist died peacefully in his sleep here, February 28. Born in Belgium, Cologne was Jean-Claude's adopted home, and his ashes were buried there during a memorial service on March 12.

Jean-Claude told friends he wished to be remembered for his activism. With unbounded energy and enthusiasm, he fought for lesbian and gay rights in both domestic

and international circles. He was an active member of the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) of Cologne where he helped found GLF's center Schulz and the Lavendelschwert bookstore, and where he participated in numerous GLF groups and activities over the years. Jean-Claude also helped found AIDS Hilfe here and was one of the earliest proponents of safer sex.

Active in GLF since 1981, Jean-Claude — along with Miriam Saphira of New Zealand — was elected one of its first two secretaries general in 1986. He combined seriousness and dedication to international solidarity with a large measure of humor, and made his unforgettable acceptance speech as co-secretary general dressed as a bearded Queen Victoria.

Jean-Claude always believed very strongly in making links between groups and in supporting emerging movements in Latin America, Africa, Eastern Europe and the Asian Pacific. He argued for the acceptance of a diversity of cultures rather than the Europeanization of the international movement. He travelled widely and spoke at least six languages. With similar zeal, he supported the development of autonomous lesbian work within the ILGA, as well as full lesbian involvement in the wider issues.

In recent years another major commitment of Jean-Claude's was the struggle against fascism. Welcoming participants to the ILGA's Eleventh Annual Conference in Vienna in 1989, Jean-Claude reminded the audience that "Gays and lesbians are facing again in many countries the consequences of the return to fascism. We must be prepared for that fight if we do not want the pink triangle being pinned again on our shirts with another significance than the symbol of the fight for our rights, or the black triangle again saying that lesbians are asocial!"

It was utterly characteristic of Jean-Claude that he refused to divorce politics from pleasure and saw life as a celebration as well as a struggle. We will all miss Jean-Claude tremendously and believe that the best tribute we can make to him is to continue his work — both the celebration and the struggle.

Donations in memory of Jean-Claude can be made to MBZ-AIDS Hilfe Köln, Account No. 220 022 81 (Bank No. 370 501 98), Stadtsparkasse Köln, WEST GERMANY. Condolences may be sent to Jean-Claude's friends and family in care of GLF-Köln, Bismarckstrasse 17, D-5000 Köln 1, WEST GERMANY.

Chicago

Continued from page 1

Citing Cook County Hospital as an example of the faltering health care system in the U.S., the actions were specifically aimed at the Cook County Board of Commissioners and the Cook County Hospital administration. "We are not targeting the very dedicated health care providers who work with HIV-infected patients at Cook County Hospital. AIDS patients get excellent care there," said ACT UP/Chicago's Jeanne Kracher. "The culprits are those who control the purse-strings and make the administrative decision about services," she said.

According to AIDS activists, numerous health care providers at the hospital, and the Director of Hospital Administration Torrence Hansen, there are as many as 1000 HIV-infected county residents on the hospital's caseload but only 30 beds on the AIDS ward. Fully 50 percent of those beds lie empty because of understaffing, according to spokespeople for the hospital. But Mary Patton, of ACT UP/Chicago argued that the hospital's excuse of understaffing is untenable, saying, "This is an appalling case of mismanagement." Patton said that the hospital "has not provided potential staff with enough incentives, like increased salary, decreased hours, daycare and other benefits. Money isn't the issue. The hospital administration did not spend \$21.7 million that had been allocated to the hospital in fiscal year 1989."

Activists also cited the exclusion of women from the AIDS ward. According to the hospital's administration, women are not admitted because the wing currently being used has only one bathroom. "The exclusion of women is not surprising given the pattern of sexism demonstrated by the

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Mass. anti-repeal fight in national spotlight

The executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force tells les/gay lawyer group that "the whole country's going to be watching"

By Joseph Cice

BOSTON — Helping to forge a campaign strategy to protect the Massachusetts gay rights law from repeal, the leader of one of the country's prominent gay organizations addressed a group of about 100 lesbian and gay lawyers here, April 27. Urvashi Vaid, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF), said that the battle against right-wingers who are trying to bring the law to a referendum has national implications. "This is the most important state or local battle bar none. The whole country's going to be watching what happens here," said Vaid, who spoke at the annual dinner of the Massachusetts Lesbian and Gay Bar Association (MLGBA).

At the dinner, MLGBA bestowed its Public Service Award on Sen. Michael Barrett (D-Cambridge) and Rep. Mark Roosevelt (D-Boston), co-sponsors of the bill that has made Massachusetts the second state in the nation to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. "The state Senate didn't do you a favor. You did the Senate a favor," said Barrett. "You provided that body with the best debate, the best example in grassroots democracy that it's had in four or five years." Roosevelt described fighting for the law as "one of the

greatest satisfactions of my life," and promised that "If the bastards put it on the ballot, we'll beat 'em again."

Vaid's speech focused on how to create an effective referendum campaign. She said it would be crucial to educate the public about "who we are, what we are really like," as well as "to educate our own people not to be complacent." The lesbian and gay community needs to "mount as broad based a campaign as possible," said Vaid. "We've got to get out the vote. This November you've got to be there."

Vaid urged everyone to learn from past referendum campaigns, such as the defeat of the LaRouche and Dannemeyer referendums on AIDS in the late 1980s, and the defeat of the 1978 Briggs initiative which would have barred lesbians and gay men from teaching in public schools. In addition, Vaid called for the making of a "coalition with our non-gay allies." "We need those voices to speak to those who don't want to hear from us," she said.

Vaid commented on the recent, sometimes acrimonious, discussions among Boston activists over whether to wage an "out of the closet campaign" versus one

Continued on page 12

ACT UP rocks the Pru

During a protest against insurance policies that discriminate against PWAs and people with HIV, a Prudential spokesperson says the company pays for experimental drugs

By Laura Briggs

BOSTON — While a rowdy "Rock the Pru" demonstration here April 23 by about 50 ACT UP/Boston members attracted the interest of lunch-hour pedestrians outside the Prudential Insurance building, 10 others took their demands for broadened health coverage for people with AIDS inside. There, a two-hour stand-off ended in a productive meeting with Prudential executives.

The late afternoon meeting yielded an announcement by corporate vice-president Joe Vecchione that Prudential Insurance does pay for experimental drugs. According to Vecchione, who was speaking on a telephone hook-up from corporate headquarters in New Jersey, the company pays for any drug classified by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as an Investigational New Drug (IND). The treatment IND program allows drug companies to make promising new drugs available before they receive full FDA approval.

Vecchione also said that Prudential pays "for off-label use on a case-by-case basis." AIDS researchers and activists have experimented with using approved drugs in innovative ways for AIDS-related opportunistic infections.

Stephen Skuce of ACT UP characterized the announcement as "very important." Vecchione claimed the policy had been in existence for a year, ever since the decision to approve coverage of the use of aerosolized pentamidine (AP). He said the decision included making that policy retroactive to when AP had been in the treatment IND phase. Although pleased with the announcement, activists said they were skeptical, pointing to the statement in Prudential's own press release for the demonstration that "non-FDA approved drugs are not covered for obvious safety and health reasons."

ACT UP/Boston has a history of protest with the Prudential Insurance Company. Last year, ACT UP demanded that Prudential pay insurance claims for AP, first as an off-label use of the approved drug pentamidine, then as a treatment IND drug. AP is now widely used as a preventative for pneumocystis carinii pneumonia (PCP).

Protesters also demanded health insurance coverage for people with AIDS, including an end to mandatory HIV testing for anyone who applies for insurance who is believed to be at high risk. Currently, according to Vecchione, Prudential "uses past medical history to determine whether or not to require the HIV test."

In addition, ACT UP demanded support for universal health insurance for all people, including funding the local health-care-for-all program and supporting a national health care system.

ACT UP/Boston held two other local demonstrations in April. On April 13, the group sponsored a die-in at the Deaconess Hospital to demand treatment for the brain infection progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy (PML). The demonstrators urged that doctors not allow people to die of PML by considering it un-



ACT UP/Boston protests insurance discrimination at the Prudential building, April 23

treatable, and demanded availability of experimental therapies like the drug heparin.

An April 30 demonstration against the end of availability of Peptide T at Fenway Community Health Center became a celebration when the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) announced a six month extension of the drug's availability (see GCN, April 22). Trial participants and activists, however, also raised concerns about when and if trial participants would be allowed to begin using other drugs, like AZT, in combination with Peptide T. While the NIMH indicated in a letter dated April 27 that concurrent therapies will be permitted at some point in the future, they gave no firm date for the implementation of that protocol. □

SPEAKING OUT ABOUT 'TONGUES UNTIED'

An interview with videomaker Marlon Riggs

By Phil Harper

Tongues Untied, the latest work of black gay videomaker Marlon Riggs combines poetry, dance, dramatic monologue, and startling visuals to portray aspects of contemporary black gay male life in the U.S. Since its release at the end of last year, Tongues has been shown at numerous film and video festivals, galleries, museums, and community centers in the United States and abroad. It has garnered widespread acclaim, including a prize at the Berlin International Film Festival in 1989. The Oakland, California-based Riggs — whose previous work includes the award-winning public television documentaries *Ethnic Notions* (on popular depictions of African-American culture since Reconstruction) and *Long Train Running* (on the Oakland blues community) — has spent the last several months traveling and discussing his work with audiences around the country. Phil Harper spoke with him during a recent trip to the East Coast, and highlights of their conversation are presented here.

Phil: How did the idea for *Tongues Untied* originate?

Marlon: The germinal source of the idea was with the publication of the *Other Countries* anthology [of poetry by black gay men], and particularly with my meeting Colin Robinson. I was tremendously excited by this publication, partially because it came on the heels of *In The Life* [the premier black gay male anthology, edited by the late Joe Beam and published in 1986] but also because I felt that it addressed my life, my issues. But then it occurred to me that the book probably wouldn't reach a lot of people, because a lot of people don't read — especially not poetry. So I began to conceive of a way to bring the material of *Other Countries* to a wider audience through video. *Tongues Untied* really began as a documentary on the *Other Countries* workshop.

Phil: It clearly developed beyond that.

Marlon: Yes. As I thought about the documentary format, I found myself being frustrated by that form of filmmaking — it didn't really express the depth of passion of the black gay experience. I struggled with coming up with a new form that would convey that experience. In 1988, I shot about an hour's worth of videotape, and then stopped, because I had no clear idea of where I was going. I especially had no sense of how to connect the poetry, to make it other than discrete pieces strung together on tape. Eventually, after eight or nine months of struggling, sequences of a potential video production started coming to me in my head — visions that allowed me to abandon the conventional documentary form. This was really important, because it allowed me to reconceive the project as different from a black *Word is Out* or a black *Before Stonewall*. I really admire those works, but I wanted to subvert people's expectations of what a gay video production could be. I wanted to let people know that what they were experiencing was very different from

Phil: One of the many ways that *Tongues* is different from the documentaries that you just named is that it is limited specifically to the experiences of black gay men. What are some of the reasons for that, and what do you see as some of the consequences of that focus?

Marlon: Well, first of all, I had limited resources. I did not have a lot of time in which to do the piece — I had been very, very sick in 1989. I had to go with what I knew I could do and what I was in a position to do. I really did not feel that I was in a position to speak about black lesbians' experience. And if I had tried to do that, what I wanted to say would have been diluted. I wanted to make it very clear that this was a very directed effort, with a very specific audience. And while I think it is very important for us to hear the voices of black les-

bians, and to discuss issues of sexuality generally in the black community, I also think that to have a specific focus within a particular project can contribute to the general dialogue in a powerful way.

Phil: Given the particular perspective and focus of *Tongues Untied*, what sort of audience responses have you gotten as the video has been screened around the country?

Marlon: I have gotten a lot of different responses, and it's taught me that no matter what you think you are saying, people will bring what they carry around with them to their understanding and interpretation of your work. For instance, I got a response from someone in the Bay Area who was disappointed with the lack of positive images of interracial relationships in the gay community. I've also gotten responses from people who wished that I had included more about my own personal experiences. I've gotten criticism from people who wish I hadn't included visions of street life or working class or effeminate black gay men. But I was not at all interested in presenting a world where everyone was middle-class and articulate and safe. Since I had no specific black nationalist intentions, per se, it allowed me to address the array of issues that I do, and that I think contribute to our liberation.

Phil: That sense of potential liberation seems to be summed up in the final statement of the work which you derive from Joe Beam — "black men loving black men is the revolutionary act." That statement resonates on many different levels. What was your conception of its importance as a sort of summary statement coming at the end of the work?

Marlon: I wanted to place the statement at the end in order to place it in the context of all the conflictual demands that black men are implicit in. I wanted it to be a metaphor for a larger dynamic within the community. My understanding of the statement required that I have a strategy that branched out into dynamics other than gay experience with the black community — the church, Eddie Murphy, Spike Lee, "buppies" — who become oppressive to other black people as the larger culture has been oppressive to black people generally throughout history. I didn't want people to be able to look at black gay experience as an experience unto itself. I wanted to force people to rethink the meaning of what it means to be black and gay and to rethink those divisions.

Phil: So that the concept of black men loving black men has to be desexualized, or ex-

panded beyond the erotic context of homosexual relations.

Marlon: Yes, and a lot of people, because of the relatively broad expression of this concept in *Tongues*, also found the depiction of gay men in the video engaging. Heterosexual black women have been particularly responsive; straight black men less so.

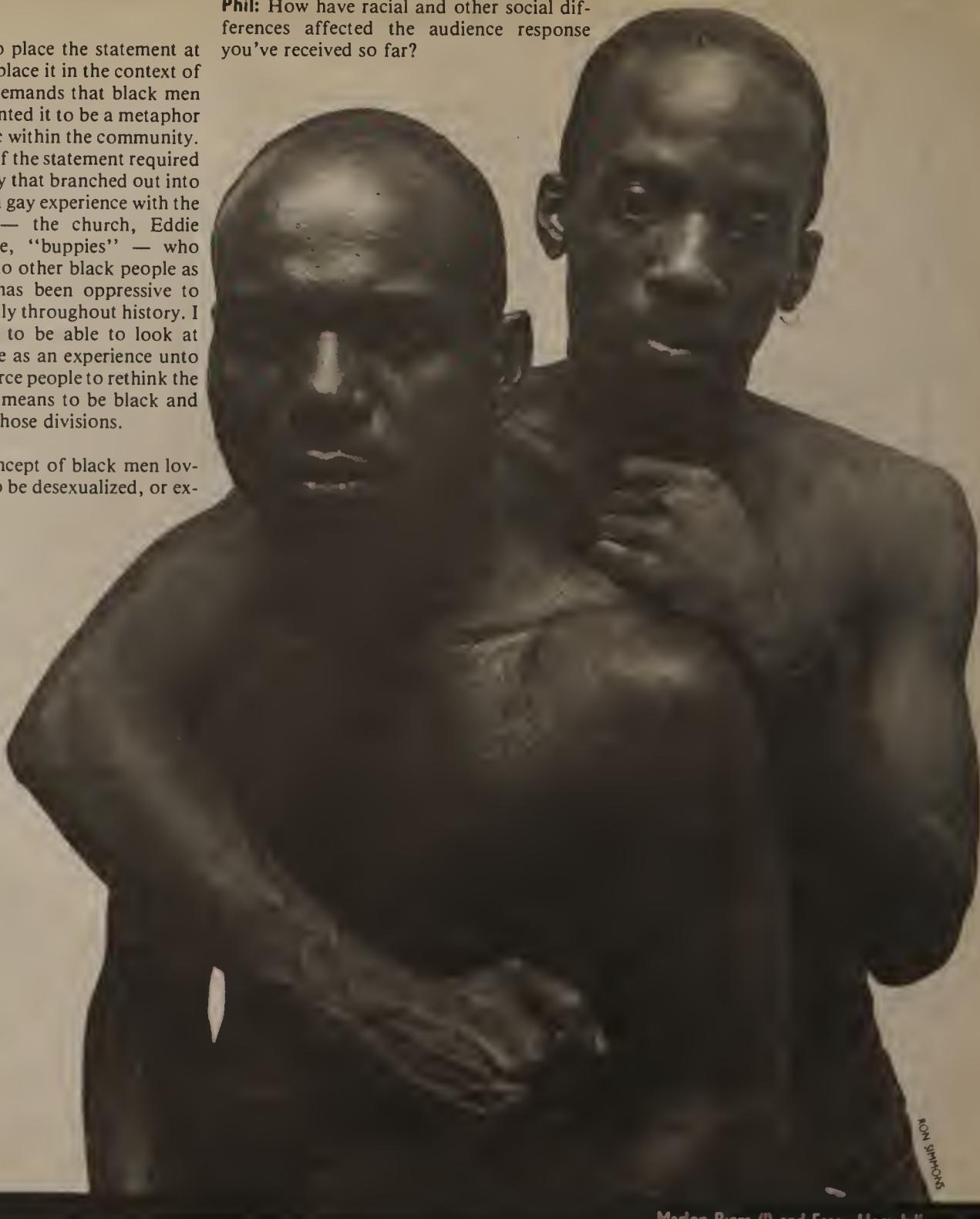
Phil: Even within the black gay male community you've run into some controversy about your interpretation of what it means for black men to love black men. In his review of *Tongues*, for instance [GCN Feb 25-Mar 3, 1990], Cary Alan Johnson suggested that it is "deceptive" of you to subscribe to a view of such love as "revolutionary" while you yourself have a white lover.

Marlon: Yes, he did. But I think it depends upon how you take the demand of black men loving black men. If you take it specifically as romantic coupling, then I guess the film would be misleading. But I don't take it that way. I take it as the experience of community, which is what the film tries to project. My standards of excellence and achievement are now oriented toward my culture and my community — that's the meaning of loving as a revolutionary act. But this issue of loving "outside the race," as it were, is one that needs to be raised within the community. It's an issue that has been silenced and that has continued to divide the community at large. We hurt ourselves because of this, when we should be embracing our difference, within the gay community as well as within the larger Afro-American community.

Phil: How have racial and other social differences affected the audience response you've received so far?

Marlon: Well, my first screening was before a predominantly white, non-gay and -lesbian audience. I've been surprised at how diverse the audiences have been. I never expected this work to speak to an audience that was outside my community, the black gay and lesbian community. I assume I would find a sympathetic audience in those groups. I have been shocked by the way the work has transcended those expectations. For instance, during one question and answer session after a screening, I had an Asian woman say, "I'm not black, I'm not gay, but I wish I were!" An Israeli Jewish woman, married with children, said the same thing. One of my students — a southern white heterosexual woman — brought her southern white heterosexual roommate to a screening, and they were very moved by it.

I thought I was speaking in tongues, words that wouldn't translate, but they do translate. I don't think the piece says the same things to people who aren't black and gay, but they get enough of it so that they understand our struggles and the affirmation of our experiences. The ultimate test was showing it in Berlin, as far away from my intended audience as I could. To have several nights of 300-400 people clapping and shouting at the end showed me how even national boundaries could be transcended. I've also gotten positive responses from the gay white community, but I must say that the white gay people who have seen the tape have tended to be socially and politically progressive, and attuned to the issues I'm addressing. It will be interesting to see the response of a white gay male audience not attuned to racism or their own complicity in the issues the work raises.



Marlon Riggs (l) and Essex Hemphill

CHOICE

By Essex Hemphill

I want to court outside the race,
outside the class, outside the attitudes —
but love is a dangerous word
in this small town.

I believe the personal is political in statement and action and that we can make very few choices, major or minor, that are exempt from political analysis. We can make no choice without incurring consequences. We can make no choice that frees us from the personal responsibility of our decisions. We can't abstain from making choices and be free of scrutiny, particularly when those choices impact upon society and culture, community and family, intimate relationships and self. Every decision we make from what brand of beer to buy to whether or not we smoke; whether we vote or choose not to; whom we love and hate, fear and admire, whom we trust or distrust. The choices made for each of these and many other issues are subject to rigorous examination.

But who among us can really judge our choices made in the name of love, choices made to nurture and fulfill intimate and emotional needs? Aren't we all too familiar with how certain kinds of couplings are judged "incorrect" and the couples are ostracized and penalized simply because they are of the same gender or are of different racial and ethnic backgrounds?

In a recent review of the black gay film *Tongues Untied* (GCN, Feb. 25-Mar. 3, 1990), Cary Alan Johnson accused the filmmaker, Marlon Riggs, of deceiving black gay men when he discovered that Riggs has a white lover, which he learned after viewing the film. Johnson wrote: "My discovery after seeing the film that Riggs has a white lover struck me as ironic and may leave some feeling cheated. I do not fault Riggs for his choice of a partner, only for what I see as a deception. Despite his obvious talent and the positive vibe of the film, one can't help but ask, does he really believe any of this? If Black men loving Black men is truly 'the revolutionary act' as he states at the film's conclusion, then why isn't he acting?"

Johnson's comments about Riggs' personal relationship are blatantly intrusive and cannot be justified in the context of a brief arts review. I will acknowledge that black people have always voiced suspicions about blacks who love whites, but to suggest that black people engaged in interracial relationships are possibly cheating the race does not answer these salient questions: Should we burn the writings of James Baldwin and Lorraine Hansberry (they had white lovers)? Should we banish civil rights activist Bayard Rustin from our history? He was the chief organizer of the 1963 March on Washington, and he had a white lover, too. Should we shred Pat Parker's poetry (she had a white lover)? If any of these people has "cheated" the race, then what race of black people are we talking about? Otherwise, many, many blacks have nourished and benefited from the work and contributions of these very important gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals. Should we not expect a similar social/political commitment and contribution from each of us, regardless of whether our lovers are black or white? Yes, interracial relationships should be discussed, but such discourse and examination should be guided by a sincere interest to understand, and such discourse should be conducted in forums suitable for exposition on the subject.

What is very disturbing to see revealed in this type of viewpoint is the suggestion that a black gay man can only love a black man to be authentically black. So I ask this question: If I choose to love a white man does my choice automatically invalidate my previous, present and forthcoming contributions to black culture? And what is this "blackness" that is being addressed? If one chooses a black mate, is one still being black while robbing and attacking innocent citizens? Is it black to be buried denying one was ever homosexual? Is it black to be fucking without a condom? Is it black to be shooting each other dead in the streets? Is it black to be selling cocaine or crack to black people? Is it a "black thing" to not discuss sexual issues frankly? Is it black of us to be scared of each other? So scared, we can't even give each other the love and healing we need? To my mind, negative actions of any type cannot be excused or justified by loving within or outside of the race.

Phil: Some of those aspects are profoundly personal, as is clear in a lot of the poetry pieces featured in *Tongues*. You yourself do a fair amount of self-revelation in the video, providing a sort of autobiographical narrative that gives the work coherence. I'm curious about what that process was like for you.

Marlon: It was exceedingly difficult to do the self-revelation in the tape. I'm fairly reserved, and not exhibitionistic at all. And, as a documentary maker, my training had been to remove myself from the picture. So *Tongues* required me to subvert those conventions as well as overcome my personal reticence.

Phil: Doing that must have been particularly difficult given the intensity of the issues you address — painful childhood memories, racial hatred, AIDS....

Marlon: Yes, and AIDS did have a direct effect on the project. As I mentioned before, it was initially difficult for me to make all the elements of the video cohere. It was after being very ill with kidney failure, and discovering that I was HIV-positive that the project really kicked into gear. What learning I was positive did was to make me realize that I had certain talents that I should not put off exercising. It made me realize, too, that just as there is a tremendous code of silence in the black community around sexuality and sexual difference, there is also a tremendous silence surrounding HIV. I couldn't deal with that as directly as I might, because you have to go through so much to deal with HIV in the black community, so I knew it would have to be a sort of gestalt view of the issue. Initially I thought I would interview people with HIV, but then I realized that that would be very difficult because of the very small number of people who would be able to risk coming out as having HIV. It became clear to me that I would have to be the one to address this issue in the tape, since it was affecting me directly. But that was hard to do, because of all the conflicting issues the disease raises in black and black and gay cultures, and within all of us as individuals. The first sequence where you see me on camera took a really long time to edit, for instance, because I had such an emotional block to the issues. I was in some ways reliving all of the vulnerability again. It was extremely painful, but extremely cathartic once I finished it. Those memories no longer had the power to hurt me.

Continued on page 13

The late editor and writer, Joseph Beam, introduced the concept that "Black men loving Black men is the revolutionary act of the '80s," but the concept was not intended to be applied solely to the romantic couplings of black gay men, which *Tongues Untied* clearly illustrates. The "revolution" referred to in the phrase is of visionary proportions. The "loving" is not simply intimate and sexual. "Black men loving Black men" speaks of a responsibility we must each have and maintain as it relates to home, community, self and each other. A responsibility that will ultimately help reshape our definitions of black masculinity and manhood. To allow ourselves to read the phrase solely as a declaration of black gay love diminishes and limits the force of its implications and the possibility of it empowering us. Though it was a black gay man who created this phrase for our possible salvation, its resonances are not restricted to the realm of black gay sexuality. We risk being self-limiting and possibly xenophobic if we allow ourselves to interpret and act upon this phrase in strictly sexual and romantic contexts. We cannot solely trust semen and kisses to bind us in relations as critical as brotherhood.

Johnson seems to believe that the sum total of Riggs' black gay journey — as it is depicted in *Tongues Untied* — is somehow not credible simply because Riggs' lover is white. This suggestion is so thin a criterion for evaluating cultural documents that I am led to ask these additional questions: Is there any doubt that Riggs' *Tongues Untied* is one of the most important cultural documents created in the black gay community for black gay men? Have we forgotten how often black culture is defined and interpreted by white people who introduce us to our own cultural legacies and uniqueness? Riggs' love has not made him less accessible to the black community. By the evidence of Riggs' accomplishments one can assume that the love he dares is empowering for him.

Does having a black lover prove that one loves himself and his culture? I assume that it does not when I witness how black gay men are sometimes so cruel to one another in the name of love. "Black men loving Black men" is totally insignificant if we are scared of each other, abusive, unsupportive and deliberately detrimental to one another. No idealistic phrase will in and of itself magically change our behavior. We have to want to change it — drastically.

It is the vision of community responsibility and unification which appeals to me most when I interpret "Black men loving Black men is the revolutionary act." In *Tongues Untied* it is the vision of empowerment and liberation that calls out to me. This is clearly illustrated when Riggs juxtaposes footage of the 1963 March on Washington against

Who among us can really judge our choices made in the name of love?

footage of a contingent of proud black gay men marching in the New York City Gay Pride Parade. His skillful blend of the footage from the two marches is a brilliant political statement that speaks of the continuing struggle for black liberation and our determination to overthrow not only racism, but homophobia as well. This does not eclipse the intimacy that can express itself romantically or in non-sexual friendships between black men. It does not exclude, either, our individual freedom to choose to love whom we want to love within or outside of the race.

I have often said, among my closest friends, that I could never love a white man in America. I don't believe I could endure the challenges interracial couples face solely for the prize of love. Within American society there exists very little to support interracial relationships. The white gay and lesbian community has often mirrored the negative attitudes and behaviors of American society regarding racial differences. Among some black gay men, the discussion of interracial relationships is often emotionally charged with anger. Points of contention quickly arise, including the idea that the black man who loves a white man is filled with self-hatred. I become seriously concerned when I hear us talk of interracial love as though it is merely an aberration, suggesting that the natural roles of white and black people are to be, for all time, adversarial, and corrupt with cruelties and indignities. When I think of black men loving white men I hear Billie Holiday singing "Ain't Nobody's Business If I Do," and I agree with her. When I think of black men loving black men I hear the same song. Should I be hearing something

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Black Film REVIEW



Summer, 1989 issue

FILM INTO PRINT

One sign of the increasing impact of black gay male film and video appeared recently in the form of a special issue of the magazine, *Black Film Review*. Published by Sojourner Productions of Washington, D.C., *BFR* has, since 1985, provided regular coverage of contemporary developments in black film and video — coverage sorely lacking in "mainstream" publications. The Summer 1989 issue (vol. 5, no. 3), which was co-produced by the Black Film Institute of the University of the District of Columbia, features a special section devoted entirely to the theme, "Brother to Brother: Black Gay Men and Film," indicating that established academic and critical institutions have begun to take seriously the contributions being made in this arena.

Most striking about this special section is that it is actually the cover feature of the issue in which it appears. Announced by a still shot — taken from Isaac Julien's *Looking for Langston* — of two sensuously posed black men looking directly out at the reader, the "Brother to Brother" section seems to promise an unflinching examination of the politics of black gay film and video production. And those issues are addressed in the articles featured, but not in as profound a manner as one would hope, given the bold statement of the cover photo.

It is entirely appropriate that this particular photo should introduce the "Brother to Brother" feature, for it is British filmmaker Isaac Julien upon whom the section primarily focuses. Three of the five articles address his latest work, the beautiful, meditative *Looking for Langston*. Indeed, the inside cover features a full-page ad for the film that immediately orients the reader to the black gay male cultural experience represented in the "Brother to Brother" section. And yet, despite an evocative review of Julien's film by Fred Brown, Jr., an informative interview with the filmmaker by Essex Hemphill, and a historical analysis of the culture of "Negro Faggotry" in light of the film, by Hilton Als, our sense of *Looking for Langston* remains incomplete after our reading.

Part of this has to do, I think, with some faulty editing — typos and misspellings (Bruce "Nugget" for poet Bruce Nugent, "Sunshine Gay Press" instead of "Gay Sunshine Press") undermine the authority of the work, while the abrupt endings to the pieces by Hemphill and Als suggest insensitive editorial cutting. At the same time, what there is of the Als analysis is somewhat offputting — written as it is in the smug tone characteristic of *The Village Voice* — and dangerously vague about its own relation to black gay male culture.

Despite these weaknesses in the pieces about Julien (along with some completely unintelligible sentences in the Als article), this trio of stories does go some way toward defining a context in which we can most productively interpret the filmmaker's achievement, and for this we should be most grateful. This accomplishment is extended further in the additional article — an interview with Marlon Riggs by Ron Simmons, conducted while *Tongues Untied* was still in production; and a very abbreviated historical overview of the depiction of black gays in commercial film, by David Frechette. While still shorter and more

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Among the attendees of the April 21 Bayard Rustin benefit were (L to R): Ken Reeves, vice-mayor of Cambridge; Orlando Del Valle, LHN; Larry Kessler, AAC; Jack Lo; Robert Colon, AAC; Dianna Christmas; Barbara Smith; Victor Rivera and Tracy Haynes, MAC.

Rustin

Continued from page 1

tables to be bombarded by chemical pesticides which cause critical illnesses to take AIDS seriously. You can't expect a society in which a woman's right to safe and legal abortion is being continually attacked and eroded to take AIDS seriously. You can't expect a system that allows millions of people to live on the streets, homeless, to take AIDS seriously.

"The gay men who are currently devoting most of their working lives combatting AIDS need to be informed about women's and lesbian health issues, and also about the history, analysis, and practice of the feminist health movement. Most of the improvements we've seen in the last two decades in patients' rights, quality of care, and prevention are the direct result of feminist organizing around health," she said.

Smith said later in a phone interview with GCN that she wants to emphasize the contributions of the community health movement. "Even before the women's movement there was a community health movement to improve and take control of health care," she said. In contrast to that movement's attempt to make health care accessible to a large number of people, she noted, "You see the dysfunctions of capitalism in glaring relief in the context of AIDS. When we have a socialist feminist, anti-racist society, you won't see something like AIDS run rampant in some communities because they are considered expendable."

Smith said that the event was very moving for her, as it brought together so many gay and lesbian people of color together around the issue of AIDS. "There's been a problem of racism at the major AIDS organizations. This event is a real departure from those kinds of understandings. AIDS work is no longer going to be controlled by white males," she said.

The other keynote speaker, Jack Lo, former co-chair of the Association of Massachusetts Asian Lesbians and Gay Men (AMALGAM) spoke about the Asian community and AIDS. He stressed that people need to be more involved in the Asian and gay Asian communities in order to learn about AIDS in that community.

Lo said afterwards that "the breakfast provides a model and a symbol of people of color coming together. The Asian gay community is so fragile — the only way we can win is to pool our knowledge together as people of color."

Noting that until recently, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) had not even kept statistics on how many Asian people have been diagnosed with AIDS, Lo talked about the absence of AIDS information in Asian communities. He said that there were very few AIDS education materials available in Asian languages in Boston, and that these were just direct translations of American materials. "It's so clinical and technical — you can't talk about AIDS like that in the Asian community. The Asian community doesn't talk about sex," he said.

The event was hosted by LeBaron Moseby, and Robert Colon from AAC gave the introduction. Other speakers there represented organizations benefitting from the fundraiser. Dianna Christmas, coordinator of the AIDS department of the Dimock Community Health Center, discussed the lack of services for women of color in the Roxbury and Dorchester neighborhoods of Boston. She also talked about the importance of empowering women of color who are involved with other women to deal with issues of health and AIDS.

Since February, Christmas has run a support group at Dimock for lesbians of color under a grant from the Department of Public Health (DPH). Christmas said that

because many lesbians of color also have heterosexual relationships, DPH was willing to fund the group under an AIDS grant, believing that heterosexual contact is the more likely source of AIDS. Dimock also runs other AIDS support groups, including a group for people of color who have recently found out their HIV status, a group for Latino men, and a group for women in recovery.

Victor Rivera of the Multicultural AIDS Coalition talked about that organization's Men of Color AIDS Information Group, which deals with issues of sexuality, health, HIV status, economics, and empowerment of men of color. According to co-facilitator Charles Tarver, the group has had between 18 and 25 people at its monthly meetings. The group is planning to develop subgroups, including a men who have had sex with other men group, an HIV/AIDS/ARC group, and an advocacy group to empower men of color, particularly around economic issues.

Orlando Del Valle spoke for the Latino Health Network, which is active in all parts of the Latino community, including serving gay men around AIDS issues. He and other members of the agency have been involved with organizing the Club Antorcha, a network of Latino gay men.

"We were working with Latino gay men, a population that is very underserved and invisible, but is there, and in numbers," said Del Valle. "But it's a subculture rather than a community. It's a community that has not yet taken full control of institutions, of political activism. That's not to say that individuals are not working very hard — they are. But in order to serve this community, we had to make it visible, had to empower it," he said.

Noting the tremendous growth in the past two years in AIDS services by and for people of color, Beverly Smith, a local Black lesbian health care activist, said that, "At the breakfast, finally you had a gathering of primarily gay men and lesbians of color addressing AIDS. It indicated years of work and growth for gay and lesbian people of color, which cannot be separated from people of color's growth in addressing AIDS." □

Chicago

Continued from page 6

County Board," retorted Johnson. "They do not believe that women are capable of making choices and that's why the Board put a stop to abortions at Cook County Hospital." (In 1980, at the initiation of the Cook County Board, the hospital stopped performing abortions unless the mother's life is in danger. Prior to 1980, the hospital performed more than 4000 abortions per year; now it performs fewer than a dozen annually.)

Speeches, music, poetry, a women's karate demonstration, a politically-correct drag fashion show, a soup kitchen, and a tent city highlighted the 24-hour vigil held in front of the hospital.

"We have to deal with AIDS in our communities since we have a disproportionate percentage of the cases and we don't receive proportionate funding," said Michele Headlam, ACT UP/Chicago member and an organizer of the People of Color and AIDS Conference.

"Because the government is not doing what it's supposed to be doing, and because many people in our communities distrust the government, we need to rely on people *within* our communities to get information about AIDS out to people, to get treatments out to people, to provide services to PWAs," echoed Ortez Alderson, another conference organizer.

The culmination of the weekend's activities came Monday, April 30, when about

Continued on page 15

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Georgia

Continued from page 3

of El Salvador in the past 10 years. "Four billion dollars that could have gone to AIDS research and support services," said Jeff Graham of ACT UP. "Not only that, approximately the same number of people have died in the war in El Salvador and from AIDS in this country in the same 10 years. We couldn't help but notice the parallel."

"As AIDS activists, we see the connection between what's happening in Central America and what's happening to our community. We are outraged that the U.S. can put such massive resources into the murder of civilians in El Salvador and we have to fight for every last penny that goes towards AIDS," said Graham.

Fort Benning is an open base. However, the demonstration did succeed at closing two entrances to the facilities, including the main gate. The military made not so subtle attempts to prevent the civil disobedience. When a thunderstorm rolled in, a soldier lied to the demonstrators, stating that a tornado had been sighted on the base. When it became clear it was "disinformation," Roger Friedman of ACLA informed the crowd that "Yes, a tornado had been sighted near the School of the Americas and it is us!" The activists then leapt out of their cars and gathered in the pouring rain as a dozen people marched onto the base towards the SOA. The CD was led by three priests carrying six-foot crosses bearing the names of the slain Jesuits. In a tribute to the women of El Salvador, many women dressed in the black pants or skirts, white blouse and scarves worn by the Mothers of the Disappeared. ACT UP members joined in the civil disobedience with pink triangles held high.

The visible support for lesbians and gay men was significant. Father Brian Pierce opened the ecumenical service with Holly Near's "Singing for Our Lives." Saying the song was a contribution from the gay movement, he added that "we join with our brothers and sisters in calling for an end for funding for war and increased funding for AIDS research." People also raised the chant "Money for AIDS, not for war, U.S. out of El Salvador" throughout the demonstration. This was a significant development for actions focused on Central America in the south. More often than not, the two movements don't mix. While lesbians and gay men have been participating in Central America solidarity for some time in other regions of the country, this was the first time a gay organization joined an anti-intervention demonstration in Georgia.

The demonstration was called by the Atlanta Committee on Latin America. Besides ACT UP, other endorsers included CISPES, the Pledge of Resistance, Central America solidarity committees in Gainesville, Fla., Birmingham, Ala., and North Carolina. Other endorsers included religious groups such as Solidaridad from the Episcopal church and representatives of the Hispanic Ministry of the Catholic Archdiocese. □

Lesbians

Continued from page 3

National Black Women's Health Project, said the Kansas City meeting was her first with the National Lesbian Conference but that she got a great impression of the "phenomenal resources" that have already come together to put on the conference.

The optimism expressed by planners about the organizing so far has also been accompanied by reminders that the work has often been difficult and frustrating and that there is still much to do, especially in the area of "anti-oppression work." As part of the process of planning the conference, the meetings have included workshops and discussions about various forms of oppression. In Kansas City, workshops were conducted on anti-racism, anti-ageism, and anti-ableism.

Mary Frances Platt, who put together a working paper for the workshop on anti-ableism, said she thought the event was the first of its kind in terms of its pro-active nature. She distinguished it from "disability awareness" and "sensitivity training" workshops.

Barb Bechdol, a Steering Committee member who is a member of the Lesbians With Disabilities Caucus, told *GCN* that she had mixed feelings about the success of the anti-ableism workshop. She said she thought people had become more aware, but that the process itself could have been

"more gentle."

The anti-oppression workshops and discussions laid the groundwork for the decision-making tasks for the weekend, which included empowering the interim Steering Committee and selecting a theme for the conference. In keeping with the themes that have continued to be raised in the previous planning sessions, the choice for conference theme was: "Diversity, Solidarity, Empowerment." Khatira Hakmah, also a Steering Committee member, said she hoped the 1991 conference would be "one big celebration" where many lesbians will attempt to "find out who we are and what we want."

But much remains to be done in the year remaining before Atlanta, according to planners. M.P. Schildmeyer, a member of the host committee in Atlanta, told *GCN* that her group is working "triple time" to both organize at the local level to ensure participation by Atlanta lesbians and to provide support for the national office, which will open in June. She said that in addition to Lewis, two other staff will probably be hired within the next couple of months. These lesbians will coordinate fundraising and "anti-oppression" work.

Hakmah said the first major fundraising event will take place during the Labor Day weekend at Lookout Mountain, near the shared borders of Georgia, Tennessee, and Alabama. Local and regional organizing committees around the country are also planning fundraising events.

There is also much organizing and mobilizing left to do. Some of the gaps in the Steering Committee membership are the result of slow organizing at the regional level. According to Kay Ostberg, some of the regions have begun organizing, but have yet to meet to select representatives. But in other regions, organizing is still in the very early stages. She said the West Coast (including California and Hawaii), Mountains and Plains (including Colorado, Nebraska, South Dakota and Wyoming) and New England (including Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island) regions are in particular need of increased participation. She added that a new organizing kit is available for lesbians who would like to begin work in their local communities and regions. It is available through the national conference office.

In addition to regional representation, several lesbians contacted by *GCN* stressed the importance of continued efforts to make sure the parity guidelines are met. They also emphasized the need to build diversity within the various caucuses that have formed. For example, Karyn Rae Doddy, an African-American woman in the Lesbian of Color Caucus, said that although that group continues to grow in numbers, there were no Asian-American lesbians present at the Kansas City meeting.

□ filed from Boston

Note: For information about: organizing in your region (including organizing kits); the Lesbians of Color, Lesbians with Disabilities, and Old Lesbian caucuses, job openings in Atlanta, The National Lesbian Conference can be reached until June 1 at P.O. Box 3057, Albany, NY 12203; phone (518) 463-1051. After June 1, write to NLC at P.O. Box 1999, Decatur, GA 30031.

Vaid

Continued from page 7

that appeals more to mainstream voters. "I don't think that the two strategies are mutually exclusive," she told *GCN*. "How can you disguise the fact that this is a lesbian and gay rights bill, and why would you want to?"

Vaid insisted that direct action and traditional political work can work well together. "I really resist the tendency to say, 'Oh, those ACT UP people or those direct action activists are ruining the show for us,' or 'All those mainstreamers really want to sell us out,'" she said. "Whether it's ACT UP/Kansas City doing its thing against Walmart or the lobbyists at the Illinois Lesbian and Gay Task Force doing their thing in the state legislature, both deserve our respect and support."

Vaid, who gained national attention March 29 for disrupting President Bush's first speech on AIDS, spoke about a variety of struggles that face lesbians and gay men in the 1990s. Describing her motivation for interrupting Bush's speech, Vaid said, "I felt it was important for him to be asked to do more." She said that Bush has requested an additional \$1.7 million in AIDS funding in his next budget, despite the fact that the National Organization Responding to AIDS

Continued on page 15

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'Tongues'

Continued from centerspread

Phil: As a sort of balance to this intensely personal aspect of the videomaking process, the piece as a whole seemed to reflect a very high degree of collaboration amongst you and the other participants.

Marlon: That was very exciting and wonderful. I directed it, obviously, but I was working with a number of artists who were established in their own right, whose work was known and legitimate. To collaborate and bring about something new and different and provocative was totally exciting. I knew that I had never done something like this before, and I knew that no one else had, so it was very exciting. And I think that that was captured in the tape. The sheer energy I would feel after having read a line of poetry for a month then finally getting Essex [Hemphill] or Wayson [Jones] to read it for me on camera was exhilarating.

Phil: That exhilaration must have contributed to the sense of community that my friends and I sensed amongst all of you on screen when we saw the tape.

Marlon: Yes, and the irony is that I really only knew one person, Colin Robinson, before the project, and I would call him up and ask, "What do you think about this person's being involved?" or "What about him?" and he would say, "Go ahead and give him a call." And people were all really excited and cooperative even though they knew that I had no budget. And the experience led to the development of real friendship among us, professional and personal and intimate.

Phil: The whole project seems like part of a larger explosion of black gay male culture that's been going on in the last few years.

Marlon: I think that's true. But it's been an explosion of culture in the much larger sense, involving political organizing, private activities, parties, and so forth. There are a number of groups that are more formally structured, and some — like Black Gay Men United, in the Bay Area — that are more informally structured. But the number of them is amazing — in Atlanta, New York, Chicago, Detroit. There is a much more explicit sense of community in black gay culture now than there used to be. There has always been a private black gay male community, but these up-front gay groups are new. Essex Hemphill has said that the '90s are our decade, and I do believe he's right about that.

Phil: Maybe we can hope to see that reflected, then, in a larger number of works like *Tongues Untied*.

Marlon: I hope so, because we need to diversify the images that are projected through the electronic media. I was talking to Isaac Julien the other day, and we were talking about what he calls "the burden of representation" — that is, given the paucity of film and video representations of our lives, the expectation that one production will do everything.

I hope that this piece will offer the inspiration for others to do their own work, especially in film and video. In this culture, for better or worse, these are the media that legitimize cultural experience. I really hope that it is not just me plugging along alone, but that others will be inspired to deal with our lives truthfully and poignantly and passionately. Not only will they potentially gain a lot of personal recognition for their work, but they will also do a tremendous service to the community. □

Choice

Continued from centerspread

different? Is to hear the same song politically incorrect?

There are many aspects to the issue of black men and white men loving one another. The presence of historical and contemporary racial conflict is one factor that affects interracial unions. Additionally, America's on-going racial terrorism has produced legitimate reason to question and discuss interracial unions. But how we judge cultural solidarity and authenticity has to be based upon much more than whom we pledge love to in the privacy of our homes. And we should never expect that the vision and the visionary are one and the same, nor should we try to force them to be or discredit

them when they are not.

If we allow narrow definitions of black identity — such as whether one's mate is black — to govern our cultural and political analysis, and our determinations of black authenticity, then we will certainly have to learn to sleep with men like Eldridge Cleaver and Louis Farrakhan (they hate and denounce homosexuals), or men like Martin Luther King, III (he recently used apology as redemption for his totally ignorant remarks denigrating gays and lesbians). They are black men, too. In fact, some of us already sleep with or have bedded black men harboring these afflictions. Some of us have already tried to love them in various contexts. But at what cost to our potential to become self-empowered black gay men? What war scars do we bear from our efforts? "Black men loving Black men" should not cost us personal dignity or self-respect. It should not result in death and injury. It should not cause us to become dysfunctional. If it does, you can be sure it is not love. Love doesn't demand such debilitating costs, people do, and they can be black, white, yellow, brown, or red. □

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Print

Continued from centerspread

abrupt than one would hope, these pieces round out the section somewhat, and suggest the existence of other dynamics in black gay film than the work of Isaac Julien, impressive and influential though that is.

The BFR special section on black gay men in film is an important step toward fuller recognition of black gay culture by the larger African-American society. It remains for us to push beyond this first step, bringing to black gay male culture the dignity of our experiences, and demanding for it the respect that it deserves. □

— Phil Harper

'T-room'

Continued from page 11

might stir up. But, I was about to be locked in a cell alone and realized that my state of health was at stake. They had all my medications and I wouldn't have access to them until a doctor had examined me. The officer wrote "ARK" on the form and informed the man who was to photograph and fingerprint us that (pointing at me) "He's the one with the ARK disease." How relevant this is to someone who is going to photograph or fingerprint you, I'm not sure. This cop was rubber-gloved (like some of my dates) as was the one who fingerprinted us earlier; I pondered that for a moment. Easy cleanup? Days later it was confirmed that the police have used gloves for the past six to seven years in fingerprinting.

Bail was set at \$25 each and then came the time for that "one phone call." (A bit tricky these days — with answering machines you seldom get a person to answer.) I only had \$18 cash with me, so I had to wait for money to cover the rest of my bail. The next day in court we were set up for a hearing a month later and assigned court-appointed lawyers. The scene was reminiscent of air-traffic control patterns at most major airports: get 'em in and get 'em out.

The gay press covered the events of the arrest and the eventual news of the reduction of the charges (from felony to misdemeanor, thanks to Kevin Cathcart of GLAD). The Harvard Crimson blatantly attacked those arrested by printing our names.

The story made for a nice tidy package of news, where by all appearances we were "the winners." What has not been reported is the fact that each of those arrested had to pay bail, court costs, a victim/witness fee, and any lawyer fees. The grand total (for all 12) comes to approximately \$4,000. Each of us is on probation for one year and has orders to "stay away" from the Science Center. For some coming up with the money may not be a problem, but for myself it is. I have limited financial resources and decided to turn to the community, not just for financial support, but support as a faggot "caught" at being a pervert.

Many may say I got exactly what I deserved, they might also say that I got "the ARK disease" because I am so promiscuous and perverse. Many would condemn me for looking for sex in a well-known "T-room" and would say that I deserved to get caught up in Harvard University's web of entrapment. By the time I was arrested the web had

Continued on page 15

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'T-room'

Continued from page 13

caught nine other men in the same bathroom that month. To my knowledge, the plainclothes operation at Harvard has ceased. But I wonder what changes have occurred in the minds of the University Police? Where will the arresting officer get his kicks nowadays? The poor guy can no longer hang out in men's rooms glued to a urinal (in the line of duty) watching other men engage in masturbatory delights. Hell, I love to do that, too, and maybe he feels the same desires I do and is wondering where to go next.

In other cities there are clubs that provide a meeting place for men who wish to engage in such lustful pursuits. To my knowledge, Boston has one private clubhouse catering primarily to leathermen/women. That is great, but not enough.

I am proudly perverse and sexually active; it is something I choose to explore to balance my life. The creative, the sexual, and the spiritual; working to integrate in a very segregated world. I desire to uncover who I am, putting aside what the world (and all of the arresting officers in it) thinks I should be. □

"Alan Long" is a pseudonym. A benefit will be held in Cambridge to cover legal fees of two of the "Harvard 12" on Sat., May 12. See GCN Calendar, p. 19, for details.

Garbo

Continued from back page

and her passion rather than societal rules. Even Garbo's self-imposed retirement was attractive to a paradoxical queen sensibility: by demanding to be left alone, she garnered even more attention to herself.

One of the last film images of Garbo actually appears in Peter deRome's 1974 high-tone gay porn film *Adam and Yves*. In a post-coital repose, Adam is telling his new trick about the time that he saw Garbo walking down Fifth Avenue. As illustration, deRome cuts in his own footage of an early '70s Garbo: slacks, sensible shoes, trench coat and wide brimmed hat, looking strong, sure and happy. It is this image, what the obits call "Garbo in Solitude," that sticks in the gay and lesbian imagination: an unfettered woman who dresses as she likes, oblivious to social norms, inventing her life, and living it on her own terms.

It has been 50 years since Garbo left Hollywood and the silver screen, but things have not changed that much. The closet is still as secure as ever and even when there is someone brave enough to venture forth (Richard Chamberlain came out in a French magazine in March), it is clearly the exception which proves the hard and fast rule. The notion that Garbo traded "stardom for silence" ignores the fact that lesbian and gay stars — or any public figure — are told to keep silent every day of their public lives. Garbo's self-imposed exile was a search for freedom: freedom from homophobia, from harassment, from prejudice. The same freedoms we are still searching, and fighting for, today. □

Chicago

Continued from page 10

1000 AIDS activists took to the streets of downtown Chicago, marching to various insurance companies, the American Medical Association, and ending in front of the Cook County Board offices. Chanting "Health care is a right, not just for the straight and white," "We want health care, not wealth care," and "Seize control," demonstrators successfully fought back baton-wielding police officers mounted on horseback to take over the streets. Protesters acted "promiscuous" at the offices of Mutual of New York, an insurance company that denied an HIV-negative woman coverage because she was "too promiscuous" and therefore at risk for AIDS. Demonstrators were arrested at various sites and charged with blocking doorways and the streets.

The largest act of civil disobedience occurred when about 40 women created an AIDS ward by placing mattresses on the street at a busy intersection in front of the County Board offices. They were surrounded by the other demonstrators who held banners calling for adequate health care for women. Affinity groups of People of Color and People with Immune System Disorders (PISD) worked in solidarity with the women who laid down in the streets and in front of police wagons. According to protesters, the police used excessive force and were par-

ticularly brutal toward the people of color, the women's, and the PISD affinity groups. One protester has already filed charges against the Chicago Police Department. Approximately 150 people were arrested and charged with mob action. All were released without bail.

Demonstrators were ecstatic over the effectiveness of their actions. Just one day following the civil disobedience, a woman was allowed onto the AIDS ward and another woman has since been admitted. "The AIDS movement is more united than ever," said ACT UP's Johnson. "We've only just begun. The fight for universal, national health care and, in Chicago, our campaign against the Cook County Board, continue." □

Vaid

Continued from page 12

(NORA) has documented the need for at least \$3.1 million. "I took what I believed to be a principled stand," she said.

During the president's speech, Vaid held up a sign that read, "Talk is cheap, AIDS funding is not," and "Remember gay people with AIDS." Vaid told GCN that she was making a personal statement as a lesbian and in memory of friends who have died of AIDS. Vaid's protest seemingly caused the White House to disinvite her from the April 23 signing ceremony for the Hate Crimes Statistics Act. (Bush had invited several gay rights advocates to join in the ceremony.) But Vaid expressed satisfaction that representatives from NGLTF did attend the event. "Our organization was not cut out," she said. "Our voices were not silenced."

Concerning the Hate Crimes Statistics Act, Vaid said, "Helms was right. It is the first step down the slippery slope [to a Federal lesbian and gay civil rights law]." Next year, NGLTF will start pushing for hearings on the national lesbian and gay rights bill, which was proposed 15 years ago, and now has eight co-sponsors in the Senate and about 64 in the House. Vaid predicted that the law would pass by the end of the decade. She pointed out that four years ago, when NGLTF launched the campaign for the Hate Crimes Statistics Act, "Nobody thought it would pass this soon, or that we would be able to preserve the sexual orientation language."

Vaid also spoke about the growing outrage voiced by universities across the country over anti-gay discrimination in the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC). Most recently, the Harvard University Faculty Council decided April 25 to join the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of Wisconsin, among other colleges, in condemning anti-gay discrimination in the military. "The ROTC situations are so outrageous and clearly wrong that I think it's going to backfire on the Defense Department," she said. Expressing frustration that "legal strategy has only gotten us so far," Vaid spoke of the "real hope that the President might" at least end discrimination against gay people in the granting of military security clearances.

Vaid concluded that "gay and lesbian freedom encompasses a commitment to eradicate sexism, racism, and economic injustice." She praised lesbian and feminist activists for spearheading the movement to include national health care and disability rights on the gay agenda. Finally, referring to the possible referendum on the Massachusetts gay rights law, Vaid declared, "The ones that we've won have been won by massive amounts of involvement."

Following Vaid's speech, Katherine Triantafillou, co-chair of the National Lesbian and Gay Law Association and a member of MLGBA, told GCN that she considers the referendum to be an important educational tool. "Whether we win, lose, or draw, it's getting people out," she said. "It's something to organize around. On the continuum, from the person who's very, very closeted to the person who's very, very out, everyone can contribute." Triantafillou added, "The point of being an activist is to tell the truth, and that may mean we lose the vote, but you don't achieve long-term results by lying."

According to MLGBA co-chair Terry Sweeney, the group seeks to "make the legislature and judiciary responsible to the needs of the community," and "serves the profession, working to develop opportunities for lesbian and gay lawyers." MLGBA also advocates for the appointment of lesbians and gay men to legal positions. Founded six years ago, MLGBA comprises approximately 150 lawyers. □

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JON & DAN

I'd like you to put a penpal ad in your paper so that somebody can write to me. Thanks so very much. Robert Lee ANDERSON, EF-166918, 10A Rm 107, 3001 Gordon Hwy, Grovetown GA 30813.

Do you have a sense of humor? Are you interested in sports, music, current events, animals, sharing your thoughts and ideas? A 33 yr old male prisoner would appreciate having a penpal with any or all of the above. Oscar ROWELL, 051750, Box 221, Raiford FL 32083.

GENE 'Linda' OSTERHOUT: to those who wrote me at Phoenix, I have been relocated to: 33616-019, Box 3007, San Pedro CA 90731. (Jimmy and John, let me hear from you real soon!)

Very good looking GM bodybuilder, 28, sparkling brown bedroom eyes, currently down and out and lonely and looking for a possible penpal. Steven ROMINE, 905259, S-E-5, Box 520, Walla Walla WA 99362.

I am 33, Black gay male prisoner, seeking correspondence with other gays. I like music (jazz), poetry, and sex. Please write. Toni Morgan MILLER, 196-746, Box 56, Lebanon OH 45036

Hi, anyone out there looking for a very sincere kind hearted bisexual male for a penpal. Well, now you've found him! Race doesn't matter to me. All TVs and TSs are especially welcome. Can't write prisoners. William WALKUP, EF-203608, Star Rt E-1 A unit, Reidsville GA 30499.

Gay black male, 29, seeking correspondence with someone who enjoys meaningful relationships. Looking forward to hearing from all you hot horny hunks. Ellis Mc MILLON, 535744, Wynne, Huntsville TX 77349.

Gay male, 20, into Indians, rock and blues, week and booz, cars, dogs, outdoors and NAMBLA. Can't write other prisoners. Would like to write someone. Charles JONES, AY-6853, Drawer R, Huntingdon PA 16652.

Gay male in fed. prison for white collar crime desires correspondence. My interests include sex, computers, electronics, music, and sports. I'm 26, and considered (by my mom!) goodlooking. Robert GRAHAM, 83219-012, Box 3007, San Pedro CA 90731.

Native of southern Louisiana, emerald eyes, smooth hairless sexy body! I would like to correspond with others as friends. My hobbies are chess, music, travel, and sports. James CHANNELL, 292458, Ellis II, Huntsville TX 77340

I am 21, light skin, cultivated and compassionate, Aries. I'd like to correspond with females or males as

calendar

6 Sunday □ **Light and Laughter.** Reading by Kate Rushin (shown right), Sharon Cox and Craig Harris to benefit the National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays. 1-3pm at The Center.

Calendar listings must be received by the Monday before the week of the event. Photos encouraged. Please specify if event is/is not wheelchair accessible and/or sign language interpreted. Please use our format as a guide for listings and put each event on a separate sheet. Listings must be typed. No phone calls, please!

5 Saturday

Boston □ **1990 Roosevelt Day Dinner.** Sponsored by Americans for Democratic Action. Featuring speaker Barney Frank, honorees include Arline Isaacson of the Mass. Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus. At Hynes Convention Center. 6pm. \$50. For info 482-3648.

Boston □ **Black Gay Men: Working Our Bodies Toward Total Wellness** Lunch and Discussion with Craig Harris. At AAC. 131 Clarendon St. 11am. Free. For info 437-6200 x298

Northampton □ **Lesbian and Gay Pride March.** March followed by rally. Beginning at Lampron Park. 12pm. For info (413)586-0622/TDD (413)586-7851.

6 Sunday

Cambridge □ **Laugh 'Til You Drop.** Comedy by 11 Women. At Indigo. 823 Main St. 3-6pm. \$6. For info 497-7200.

Boston □ **Light and Laughter.** Reading by Kate Rushin, Sharon Cox and Craig Harris to benefit The National Coalition for Black Lesbians and Gays. At The Center 338 Newbury St. 1-3pm. \$7 more/less is okay.

Cambridge □ **Gay and Lesbian Community Volleyball Tournament.** Fans welcome. At Martin Luther King School, Putnam Ave. 2-10pm.

Amherst □ **Reading by Elly Buskin.** At Food for Thought bookstore. 27 Pleasant St. 3pm. For info 253-5432.

Dorchester □ **Gala Monthly Potluck.** 7pm. For info 825-3737.

Somerville □ **GLOSS Monthly Potluck.** At 71 Union Square. 6pm. For info 628-2532.

Jamaica Plain □ **Gay and Lesbian Swing and Ballroom Tea Dance.** Lessons 2-4pm, Dancing till 5pm. At Firehouse Multicultural Arts Center. 659 Centre St. For info/to register 524-3816.

7 Monday

Boston □ **Tax Resistance Clinic.** Sponsored by NE War Tax Resistance. At Community Church. 565 Boylston (wheelchair accessible). 7-9pm. For info 731-6139.

8 Tuesday

Boston □ **Lesbian School Teacher/Administrators Potluck.** 6:30pm. For info 492-1822.

Boston □ **Healing Service for All Affected by AIDS.** At Trinity Church. Copley Square. 7:30pm. For info 628-7665.

10 Thursday

Boston □ **The Group meeting.** At 338 Newbury St. 8pm. For info 734-2078.

Boston □ **NAMES Project Quilting Bee.** Sewing supplies and support provided. At Arlington St. Church. 6-9pm. For info 451-9003.

Cambridge □ **Poetry Reading by Ann Lauterbach.** At MIT Building E51-140. 8pm. For info 253-9469.

11 Friday

Cambridge □ **Women Forging Community: Mothers and Daughters Together for Peace.** At Longfellow Hall, Radcliffe College. 7pm. For info 495-8212.

Boston □ **Alternative Insemination Orientation.** Information for lesbians and other interested women. At FCHC. 16 Harvard St. 6-8pm. For info 267-0900.

Portland, ME □ **Opening Night of the Maine Gay and Lesbian Film Festival.** Continues May 12 & 13. At Portland Museum of Art and Portland Performing Arts Center. For info (207)799-1703.

12 Saturday

Boston □ **Display of Panels from the NAMES Project.** With Havdalah service at 6pm. At Temple Israel. Longwood and Plymouth St. For info 566-3960.

Nashua, NH □ **An Evening of Cultural Connections.** Overview of music and literature of the gay and lesbian community. At Unitarian Universalist Church. 8pm. \$6. For info (603)595-2650.

Cambridge □ **Open & Gross Fundraiser.** Raise funds to cover court costs for 2 of the "Harvard 12." At "KIDZ" House. 14 Lawrence St. 9pm-2am. \$5 more/less okay. For info 576-2368.

13 Sunday

South Shore □ **GLASS (Gays and Lesbians of the South Shore) Monthly Meeting.** 6-8pm. For info 380-7933.

Brookline □ **Swing and Ballroom Dance Classes.** Begin five week session of classes for gays and lesbians. For info 522-1444.

Cambridge □ **Mother's Day Extravaganza.** Music by Tricia Langlois, Adrienne, Doshie Powers, and Michael Andrew Frank. at 212 Hampshire St. 8pm. \$6. For info 876-9330.

Boston □ **Open casting call for "Gays for Patsy."** Group will participate in Gay Pride Parade. At Gladdance Studio. 551 Tremont St. 2pm. For info 825-3268.

14 Monday

Boston □ **Meeting for Boston Team going to Gay Games III.** All welcome. At The Center. 338 Newbury St. 8pm. For info 288-1606.

18 Friday

Jamaica Plain □ **Gay and Lesbian Ballroom Dance.** New Monthly Event. Evening begins with lessons, proceeds to FCHC. 8:30-12am. \$5. For info 524-3816.

WEEKLY EVENTS

Saturday

Boston □ **Gay Boston,** with Jim Voltz. Boston Neighborhood Network, channels A3 and A8. 7:30-8pm.

Boston □ **Lesbian Fun and Games.** Smoke and alcohol free. At The Center. 338 Newbury St. 7-10pm \$2 donation. The third Saturday of the month.

Sunday

Cambridge □ **Lesbian Soccer Team.** Seeks new experienced players. For practice/game schedule 661-6771.

Boston □ **Boston Alliance of Gay and Lesbian Youth (BAGLY).** Open to youth age 22 and under. 35 Bowdoin St. 2-5pm. 523-7363 or 1-800-42BAGLY.

Boston □ **Boston Healing Circle.** All are welcome. Metropolitan Health Club aerobics room, 209 Columbus Ave. 7:30-9:30pm. For info 731-9584.

Boston □ **The Gay Dating Show.** WUNR 1600 AM. 10:30pm-2:30am. Lesbians and gay men.

Boston □ **ALATEEN Group** open to lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth, 22 and under. 338 Newbury Street, rm. 202k. 6pm-7:30pm. Dave, 629-2518 or Frank, 666-8912.

Somerville □ **GLOSS: Gays and Lesbians of Somerville and Surroundings.** Monthly potluck. 71 Union Sq. 6pm. First Sunday of each month. For more info Lisa 628-2532.

Monday

Boston □ **Monday Night Rap Group.** Talk to others living with HIV. 38 Appleton St. 7:30-9pm. For info 694-0964.

Boston □ **Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights** holds bi-weekly planning meeting. The Center, 338 Newbury Street. 7pm. 776-6956.

Worcester □ **AIDS Project Worcester.** A support group for family, friends, concerned others dealing with HIV. 305 Shrewsbury St. 7-8:30pm. For info 755-3773.

Cambridge □ **Lesbian Rap Group.** Topics: 5/7 5&M, 5/14 Competition. at Women's Center. 46 Pleasant St. 8-10pm. For info 354-8807.

Tuesday

Boston □ **Lambada Dance Class.** Tuesdays and Thursdays. 128 A Tremont St. 4th fl. 6pm. For more info 576-1018.

Boston □ **Brazilian Dance Class.** Tuesdays and Thursdays. 128 A Tremont St. 4th fl. For more info 576-1018.

Boston □ **Gay Fathers of Greater Boston** meet 1st and 3rd Tues. of the month. Lindemann Ctr., 2nd fl. 8-10pm. 742-7897.

Boston □ **Gay and Lesbian Support Group for Adult Children of Alcoholics.** Faulkner Hospital. 8:30-10pm. Intake interview required. 522-5800 x1908.

Boston □ **Lesbian and Gay Freedom Trail Band Rehearsals.** No audition necessary. At Mass College of Art. Longwood and Brookline Ave. 7:15pm. For info 266-0628.

Providence, RI □ **ACT UP/Rhode Island** open meetings. Rocket, 73 Richmond St. 7pm. 273-7228.

Boston □ **ACT UP/Boston** meets to confront the AIDS crisis. The Living Center, YWCA, 140 Clarendon St. 7pm. 49-ACT UP.

Cambridge □ **Bisexual Women's Rap.** Topics: 5/8 Religion, 5/15 Role Models for Youth. Women's Center. 46 Pleasant St. 7:30-10pm. 354-8807.

Cambridge □ **30-plus Lesbian Rap** Topics: 5/8 Emotional Dependency, 5/15 Shyness. At Women's Center. 46 Pleasant St. 7-8:30. For info 354-8807.

Cambridge □ **Women For Sobriety,** a self help group for women recovering from addictions. Women's Center. 46 Pleasant St. 8-9:30pm. 354-8807.

Arlington □ **Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays** meets on the second Tuesday of every month at First Parish Unitarian Church, 630 Mass. Ave. 7:15pm. Info: 547-2440 or 508/562-5807.

Boston □ **Boston Coalition for Black Lesbians and Gays.** 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month. Harriet Tubman House. 6:30pm. For info 825-2610.

Medford □ **WMFO 91.5.** Community talk radio show with Sheila Parks. 7-9am. Tufts University radio.

Worcester □ **Support Group for HIV-positive Gay/Bisexual Men and Their Significant Others.** Closed meeting. At AIDS Project Worcester. 305 Shrewsbury St. 7-8:30pm. For info 755-3773.

Wednesday

Boston □ **Boston Alliance of Gay and Lesbian Youth.** Open to youth age 22 and under. 35 Bowdoin St. New persons' meeting 6pm; women and men meet separately 6:45-7:30; general meeting at 7:30pm. 523-7363 or 1-800-42BAGLY.

Worcester □ **Supporters of Worcester Area Gay and Lesbian Youth7.** Open to gay and bisexual youth 21 and under. Meets 1st and third Wednesday of month at United Congregational Church. 6 Institute Rd. 7pm. For info (508) 755-0005.

Cambridge □ **Say it, Sister!** WMBR, 88.1 FM. 7-8pm.

Cambridge □ **Lesbian Al-Anon** with childcare, wheelchair accessible. At Women's Center. 46 Pleasant St. 6:30-8pm. For info 354-8807.

Thursday

Boston □ **The Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights.** Meets alternating Thursdays. At The Center, rm 202K. 338 Newbury St. 6:30-8pm. For info 828-3039.

Northampton □ **Valley Gay Alliance** meets 1st, 3rd Th. every month, basement of the Unitarian Church, 22 Main St. 7:30pm. 413/527-5310.

Stoneham □ **Incest Survivors Group** for women. New England Memorial Hospital, 5 Woodland Rd. 5-6:30pm. Sara Epstein, 979-7025.

Boston □ **Boston Area Rape Crisis Center** drop-in group for women who have been raped. 492-RAPE.

Cambridge □ **Incest Survivors Group.** Women's Center. 46 Pleasant St. 7:30-9:30pm.

Cambridge □ **Non-offending male sexual abuse survivors group** meets first Thursday of every month. Cambridge Ctr. of Commerce conference room, 859 Mass. Ave. 8:30-10pm. \$5 donation. 498-9881.

Boston □ **GLAAD: Boston Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation.** General meetings 2nd Thursday of the month. The Center rm 202. 338 Newbury St. For info 492-4639.

Friday

Watertown □ **GLOW: Gays and Lesbians of Watertown.** For more info 395-4664.

Worcester □ AIDS Project-Worcester support group for HIV-positive, PWAs, PWRCs, supporters. Open to all lesbians, gay men. 51 Jackson St. 7-9pm. Dana 508/755-3773.

Brookline □ **"Swingtime".** Lesbian, gay bisexual swing dance lessons. First Friday of the month. 185 Corey Rd. 8:30-9:15. \$4. For info 661-1792.

Boston □ **Classic Films On Super 8 Film.** At The Boston Living Center. 140 Clarendon St. free. For info 236-1012.



By Michael Bronski

NEW YORK — GRETA GARBO DIES AT 84; TRADED STARDOM FOR SILENCE read the headline in the *New York Times*, and that, of course, has always been the basis for the myth. She was the temperamental star, the woman with the mysterious secret, the actress who was so intense that her art became an agony to enact before the cameras. Her name became synonymous with her most famous line from Edward Goulding's 1932 *Grand Hotel*: "I want to be alone." And in 1941 at the age of 36, after 27 films, she retired not only from the industry, but from public view.

In the world according to Hollywood this was inexplicable. True, her last film — the meager comedy *Two Faced Woman* — was moderately unsuccessful, but stars like Bette Davis, Joan Crawford, and Barbara Stanwyck had weathered unsuccessful films. And almost all of Garbo's earlier Hollywood movies were highly successful. Garbo's vanishing act was a puzzlement; a seemingly irrational act which confused and confounded both the industry and the public. But in its rush to reduce a life to a headlinc, the *New York Times* got it wrong; what Garbo traded was a highly visible lifestyle for the privilege of privacy.

The Garbo mythos was one that revolved around her privacy. Even at the height of her career, she would not give interviews, would not allow reporters onto the set and refused to participate in the much publicized nightlife which oiled the wheels and careers of the industry. What was seen as idiosyncrasy quickly became a public relations ploy by the studio, and Garbo's enforced isolation became her trademark. Unlimited reasons have been offered to explain her passion for secrecy, as well as the retirement, but the obvious reason — her lesbianism — is never mentioned. The ordeal of remaining in the closet, of divorcing the personal life from the public image, is a terrible hardship. Rather than live a lie, Garbo decided to live for herself.

Rumors of Garbo's lesbianism surfaced within years of her 1925 arrival in Hollywood. She was one of the first women, along with Marlene Dietrich, to publicly wear men's clothes (the smallest size oxfords, sailor pants and a tailored shirt were a

She really did 'want to be alone'

Media reports obscured the late Greta Garbo's lesbianism and refusal to sell out



Filming 'Love.' (l-r, front) William Daniels, Edmund Goulding, Garbo. (rear) Two "unidentified guests." favorite outfit.) And while *Photoplay* was eager to divulge such details as her wearing men's pajamas for sleeping, the eccentric aspects of her public image caused some discussion; there is a thin line between *couture* and perversion.

Garbo's low-profile private life was spent with other culturally sophisticated, bohemian emigres like Bertold and Salka Viertel (the inspiration for Christopher Isherwood's 1945 novel *Prater Violet*) who were perhaps less judgmental about matters of sexual preference, and this made her a little suspect. Although publicity linked Garbo romantically with several male co-stars,

she never married or, for that matter, even dated men. For although the Hollywood of that era had the reputation of being one long wild party, it was clear that homosexuality was not as acceptable as adultery, drug use, and heterosexual promiscuity. Even a prominent director like James Whale was shunned, and cast out, when his private gay life became too public.

There have been, of course, plenty of lesbians and gay men in Hollywood. And as more posthumous biographies are published, the facts are more and more clear: Monty Clift, Tyrone Power, Miriam Hopkins, Cary Grant, and, on occasion, Joan

Crawford. But all of these people played by the rules. Garbo understood the severe limits placed upon her and made her choice.

If the straight world had inklings of Garbo's lesbianism, the gay world certainly had no doubts. Mercedes de Acosta's fascinating 1960 autobiography *Here Lies the Heart*, a lesbian classic, is a virtual who's who of 1930's lesbian Hollywood: Garbo, Dietrich, Tallulah Bankhead, Eva Le Gallienne (later an intimate of May Sarton), Elizabeth Marbury (who along with her lover Elsie de Wolfe invented the tea-dance), Jeanne Eagles and Bessie McCoy. The rare photo of Garbo on the set — photographers were almost always banned — usually shows her seated with her co-stars, director, and "unidentified guest." And, of course, there is the 1933 *Queen Christina* in which Garbo plays the lesbian monarch of Sweden, spending much of her time in men's clothing and announces, after being accused of being an old maid, that she "will die a bachelor." It is no surprise that *Queen Christina* has been both a lesbian and gay male cult film, for it captures, better than anything else, the bisexual appeal of its star.

Garbo is one of the few cultural icons who probably has had equal appeal to both lesbians and gay men. Lesbians of the '40s, '50s and '60s loved Garbo's self-assured independence, her nose-thumbing masculine affect, and her passionate display of emotional sexuality. Even when she is in a love scene with a male actor — the 1936 *Camille* with the wooden Robert Taylor is the perfect example — she is so fervent, so private that it is as though she is making love to herself. One of the great Garbo gifts was an all consuming, self-absorbed intensity which allowed viewers to respond directly, personally, to her highly-wrought emotionality. Like Dietrich, she was able to speak to the camera and reveal inner passions which are usually hidden, cloaked by convention.

The gay male sensibility viewed Garbo in a slightly different light. Told by the world that their passion was wrong, gay men responded to her as an embodiment of pure and passionate love which transcends social circumstances. Her Mata Hari, Camille, Anna Karenina were all women who — like them — broke taboos for her love. She was the real erotic rebel who followed her heart.

Continued on page 15

If You Have Not Taken the HIV Antibody Test...

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